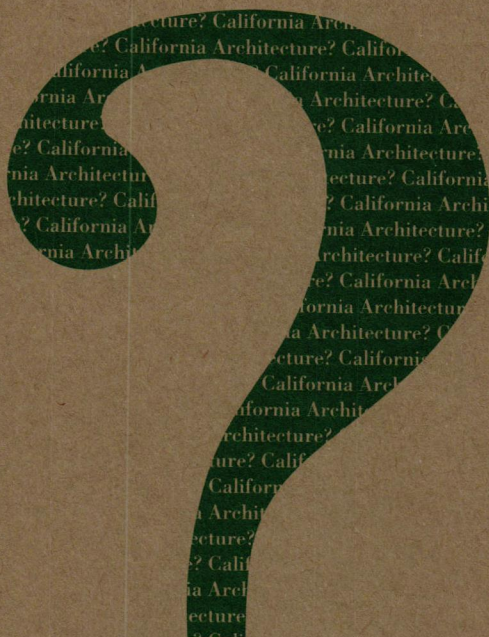


Feb 1991

A R C H I T E C T U R E  
**CALIFORNIA**









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**CALIFORNIA**

Volume 13 Number 1 February 1991

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# From the Editor

Is there such a thing as "California architecture"? In an effort to know ourselves better, this is a worthwhile question to ask and it seems only natural that this journal would assume the task. The impression generated by the national media's love affair with a few very talented practitioners is perhaps the best known characterization of the current California condition. *Architecture California* 12:1 discussed communities' definitions of appropriate architecture. But does our current understanding of what we are match with reality? This collection of essays explores some alternative roads and takes advantage of "insider" perspectives to examine the landscape of the California we drive by as well as the protagonists that helped shape it.

It can be said that architecture arises from a basic preoccupation with the relationship of inside to outside and thus with the implied definition of edges. This can be seen as the physical manifestation of the human urge to make the world manageable through the creation of boundaries. Native Californians once defined tribal boundaries and fighting grounds very precisely. Today, the very existence of this journal is due to a belief in the benefits of regional organization.

Looking for fresh approaches to the idea of a California architecture, this issue revisits the larger ideas of region and regionalism. The results reflect a fascinating complexity in the place where we have chosen to live and give us clues for appropriate architectural responses.

Interestingly enough, issues discussed in our August 1990 issue are present here again: community visions have become regional visions of suitable architecture for ideal lifestyles; exclusion and segregation may again lie behind

seemingly benign images of domesticated landscapes; community fences have become regional borders. As we will discover, our strength may lie in resources yet largely untapped, in a reality and a notion of place that is as novel to the world as the visions that created California.

In this issue, I would like to extend some very special thanks to John Allebrand, who has generously taken time from his established professional writing career to volunteer his expert review of our work. I would also like to thank Michael Segal, my husband, for his ongoing support in this enterprise.

I have now reached the end of my commitment as editor of *Architecture California*. With a very difficult budget and large amounts of effort, we have created and produced a publication that, from a regional perspective, fills a void in the national arena of professional media. I would like to thank our contributors for their interest and cooperation. In particular, I want to acknowledge those that created and made possible this concept: Joseph Esherick, FAIA, Barton Phelps, AIA and William Turnbull, FAIA. It has been an honor to be a member of such an enlightened team.

Last, but not least, many thanks to you, our readers. Your letters of support (that continue to find their way to my desk from as far away as Australia) have helped secure a 1991 budget that will allow for an even better product. I invite you to continue this dialogue and to share your ideas on the journal's format and content. Relax and enjoy reading this collection of provocative essays – very much ours and very alive – and join us in this exploration of region and architecture.

Alicia Rosenthal, AIA



# From Our Readers

I am intrigued by the August 1990 issue of your magazine. I don't recall much about what its predecessors were but it is clear to me that this new format must be a radical departure. It reminds me of the scholarly journals typical of other professions. However, it is far more accessible than most such journals. I think the breadth of your articles and the fact that they are generally substantive and readable is encouraging. I think you've done a fascinating job and I congratulate you.

Richard Fitzgerald  
Executive Director  
The Boston Society of Architects

You have produced a meaningful publication that for once does not stack up and then throw away but reads and saves! If there was ever a professional "literary" magazine, this has to be it. Taking the subject matter addressed in this issue, it is timely. Taking the historical aspects of this issue, it is educational. I am anxiously waiting for the next issue.

Edward J. Levitch, AIA  
Levitch Associates, Berkeley

Super August 1990 issue. How did you ever pull it off? It's the best thing since John Entenza and *Arts & Architecture* and Don Canty and *Architecture*. It will soon be an out-of-print classic.

Whitney R. Smith, FAIA  
Whitney R. Smith, Architect,  
Sonoma

**Architecture California** is very impressive as a journal from a State group – congratulations to the editor and the editorial board. Issues about aesthetic control and urban design are indeed

contentious here and I have not found elsewhere a comparable collection of arguments, ideas and case studies. I think such regional journals are very important if they can maintain a sufficient intellectual standard which links scholarship to the concerns of practice.

Professor Anthony Radford  
Head, Department of  
Architecture  
University of Adelaide, Australia

**Architecture California** looks splendid: meaty and well designed. My congratulations! I hope you can maintain this level of quality in future issues.

Cesar Pelli, FAIA  
Cesar Pelli and Associates  
New Haven, Connecticut

No doubt by now you have had a few comments from architects complaining about **Architecture California** – small size, no color, too much writing, and a recycled plain brown wrapper cover.

I just thought you would like to know that I thought the magazine was excellent, and an extremely clever response to the budget problems engineered by the previous attempt to be a traditional glossy. I like very much the semi-academic tone of the magazine – it is appropriate for a professional body. I just hope there are enough members who enjoy reading that will also appreciate what you are doing.

Christopher Arnold, FAIA  
BSD Building Systems  
Development, Inc., San Mateo

Your publication arrived at a very propitious moment in our town's concern with



the concept of design review. As a planning commissioner participating in the writing of our zoning ordinances which include the procedures and guidelines for design review I have become very cynical as to just what positive results can ensue for the whole review procedure. Seventeen architects in Marin have come out in protest to the many architecturally constraining issues in the zoning ordinances and are particularly against design review process and guidelines.

Your current edition on the subject does fairly review the issues but it seems to me a more positive positioning of the AIA for greater design freedom is most urgently needed.

Warren Callister  
Callister Gately Heckmann &  
Bischoff, Tiburon

For the first time in my 35 years as a member of the AIA, I feel proud about **Architecture California**. This is what it is all about: careful, thoughtful review and analysis of various viewpoints on issues that affect our profession to such a large degree, and not to make light of this responsibility.

I look forward to future issues and I am paying my CCAIA fees with more conviction, knowing that a part of it will go towards this fine publication, which presents such a mature and adult face of the California architects to the public at large and yes, the politicians as well.

Kurt Meyer, FAIA  
Meyer & Allen Associates,  
Los Angeles

The August issue is refreshing, stimulating and useful. It's refreshing because it concentrates on a single key issue – design review – that is redefining how California's built environment is being shaped; stimulating, because it gives the reader a wide variety of points of view from knowledgeable professionals in the field; and useful, because it presents

information that, to my knowledge, is available from no other single source.

By promoting the independent, educated discourse of ideas you are offering a window on architectural thinking in California and, by extension, setting a very high standard of professionalism. Well done.

Daniel Gregory  
Associate Editor  
*Sunset* magazine, Menlo Park

I would like to express my sincere appreciation for the new format of **Architecture California**. I was extremely pleased to see the format has been converted to what appears to be a journal with real substance, not only for architecture professionals, but also individuals involved in architectural academic communities throughout California. I found each of the articles included in this volume to be well written and to the point in providing meaningful information to the reader.

W. Mike Martin, Ph. D., AIA  
Head, Architecture Department  
California Polytechnic State  
University, San Luis Obispo

Your August, 1990 issue is regarded in my opinion as the best thing the CCAIA has ever produced. It is worthwhile to read, is full of useful information and was written by architects about architecture which is most refreshing. It was a brilliant idea with great potential to tap the tremendous resource of experience, concepts and ideas of architects that did not have a forum before and were never asked.

Lyman Ennis, AIA  
Lyman Ennis, Architect, AIA,  
Pasadena

# Architectural Californialism

*Betsey Olenick Dougherty, FAIA*

This journey into the topic of California regionalism is intended to be one of conceptual fancy. You and I share the same rich passion for architecture, or you would not have found yourself here, buried in a journal dedicated to the subject. I caution you not to look to me for academic study or researched references, but rather to join with me in reflection.

California is one of this world's most special places. We are truly residents of God's country. I find myself fiercely patriotic when traveling from the southern California beaches to the Big Sur coast, from the quiet of the desert and the Sierra Nevada, to the hustle and bustle of our vibrant cities. What other state can boast of the natural beauty of Yosemite Valley, Lake Tahoe, Sequoia/King's Canyon, Mammoth Lakes, Death Valley, and the central valley? Our cities are as beautiful and diverse as San Francisco, Monterey and Carmel, Santa Barbara, Los Angeles, Newport and Laguna Beach and San Diego. We are blessed with a mild climate and a strong economy. Our riches abound. O.K. — so we are not doing such a great job of taking care of this precious land and its resources, or ourselves for that matter. We battle traffic congestion and smog, record-breaking growth and the high cost of living in our urban business centers. We are accused of materialism and insensitivity, a general lack of heritage and culture, and a declining success rate in the education of our youth. Everyone and every place shares these woes, you say. True enough. You and I share this consciousness of the environment, of our place in the overall

scheme of things because we care; and because architecture "brings it all together," we can individually and collectively "make a difference." California conjures up a variety of images to those on the outside. Nationally and worldwide, we are equated with bikini-clad roller-skaters on Venice beach, with a red convertible weaving its way up Highway 1 on the Big Sur coast, with towering redwood forests, and with San Francisco cablecars merrily clanking between rows of Victorian facades. To others we represent freedom, progressive thought, and a dependable livelihood. So, what is the truth? And how is our built environment a stylistic reflection of our values and our society?

Here is what I submit to you as that truth. California is a land of opportunity, as trite as that statement might seem. We are a population of hardworking individuals, striving to be successful in business while creating a nurturing and secure home for our families. We want to take advantage of what life has to offer, but we also want desperately to do right and to give something back. Yes, we are in perpetual pursuit of the American Dream and its associated quality of life. Our state economy rivals most countries, and our vitality challenges not only our personal stamina, but our socio-political system. Underneath that stereotypical "California Crazy" image is a good measure of national and international respect mixed well with a little dash of envy. This is our shared regionalism. And within this region are truly unique subregions that make California the beautiful mosaic that we know and love.



California architectural regionalism has probably been given the greatest media boost by the contemporary architectural "deconstructive" experimentation affectionately attributed to West L.A. Thankfully Los Angeles is finally known for significant art and architecture, and not just for poor air quality. Our more traditional and historic imagery belongs to the Bay Area brown shingle style, and to the lovely San Francisco Victorians of the shipbuilders art. The true referential and contextual architecture of California belongs to the legacy of the California missions. If we are regionally unique, it is our Spanish and Mexican history that makes us so. Not one of us can take exception to the grace and caring so evident in the cities of Santa Barbara and Monterey. But design review boards and building moratoriums challenge the architect and the community to "do the right thing" in the name of preservation, sensitivity and the common good.

I would like to think that all Californians have a sense of who we are, where we have been and where we are going. We are akin in our diversity, in our commitment and drive, and in our regional pride. We may take life for granted one day, and push the edges of our respective envelopes the next. We are consistently inconsistent, frustrating and endearing. Is our built environment a reflection of our society, of regionalism? Is there such a thing? From this Californian's perspective, I am surprised to admit, maybe so!

# Babies and Baths: Cultural Region and Place\*

Clarence Mondale

Everyone is familiar with the word *region* and everyone uses it as if he or she knows what it means. The word serves metaphorically: "regions" of discourse or thought. It serves pragmatically, as in describing oneself as from "the Pittsburgh region" when speaking to a stranger. It serves administratively, as when one speaks of regional divisions of a government or a corporation. We are all at least vaguely aware of regionalisms of speech or folkways. Yet few of us can define the word with any precision.

In part this is because so few of us have studied geography beyond the eighth grade. The word *region* is coextensive with that discipline. Just as an historian speaks chronologically (of epochs or periods), a geographer speaks chorographically (of regions). An historian asks when (and the why of when); a geographer asks where (and the why of where). The study of "where" is the study of regions. An individual once remarked to me that his English schooling posed history and geography as the mother disciplines of education in the liberal arts, which is the way it should be. The calamitous decline of geography and of geographical literacy in the United States has meant that few of us Americans understand whereness, that is region, as a basic category of thought and liberal education.

The vagueness of the term *region* is, in part, the product of modern times. We

travel across the continent in hours; we communicate across that same distance instantaneously. As professionals we belong to what have been called "everywhere communities." Regional distinctions seem the product of simpler and slower times. "If you've seen one airport [or McDonald's, or Benetton, or. . .], you've seen them all." The attitude easily generalizes to the environment itself. I've heard it said that if you've seen one redwood, you've seen them all. Babies and baths: the universalizing of modernist thought has overreached itself; we need to reassert the centrality of habitat to the understanding of self and culture (the baby) no matter how fast our track (the bath).

Our interest here is in a type of region, the cultural region.<sup>1</sup> The systematic study of cultural regions derives from European interest in the rural landscape. The pioneer in such study was Paul Vidal de la Blache, writing at the turn of the present century. Vidal set out to describe a "traditional" region or area in terms of that seemingly timeless rural landscape. The ideal form of the traditional region involved a perfect coincidence between culture and habitat, "blood" and "land." In terms of this approach, cultural persistence and the distribution of traditional traits were the phenomena to be described.

American culture has always been relatively mobile, and so any perfect

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\*I want to thank Michael Steiner, Joseph S. Wood and Jane Loeffler for their comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

<sup>1</sup> See Steiner and Mondale (1988) for a discussion of research in architecture and planning.



coincidence between blood and land has always been out of the question. Scholars speak, however, of American traditional culture areas, understood to be looser forms of the traditional region, behaving in a generally similar way. The study of the traditional culture area, like the study of region, is the study of the distribution of traditional traits.<sup>2</sup> In the case of the culture area as in that of the traditional region, the search is for a homogeneity in the relationships between humans and their environments, some approximation to the geographical ideal of a "total" region, "tracts of territory that are congruent in terms of everything – physical features as well as social, economic, political, and other human traits."<sup>3</sup>

Geographers have argued that our traditional culture areas were formed as traits brought from England were transplanted to New England, Pennsylvania and southern Tidewater areas, and then carried west to successive contiguous areas. Traditional house forms in Michigan were determined to be similar to house forms in New England, and forms in Tennessee similar to those in Virginia. Regional boundaries were drawn in terms of such patterns of diffusion. The scholars searched for such "totality" or homogeneity as American conditions allowed. Thus scholars spoke of a Mormon culture area in spite of the many diversities within it, because, they say, it is more Mormon than areas outside its boundaries.<sup>4</sup>

Another ideal type of region, not usually associated with the cultural region, is described as functional or nodal. This type is most perfectly realized in a modern urban-industrial economy, like that of the United States today. Students of this type of region divide the nation up into urban nodes and their hinterlands. The size of the hinterland is largely determined by economic or demographic measures, as disclosed, for

example, in patterns of bank transactions or the flow of commuters. Mapping such patterns yields a complex of nodal regions and a hierarchical ordering of urban centers, with Fargo subordinate to Minneapolis, say, and Minneapolis subordinate to Chicago.<sup>5</sup> A further abstraction of such patterns is said to yield a national "core" region (historically along the New York-Chicago axis) and a "periphery" (everywhere else). Changes since World War II have led to the argument that the Sunbelt – the South and the Pacific West – is an "emergent" core area.<sup>6</sup>

These two ideal types of region, traditional and nodal, may be represented as the polar ends of a continuum within which to locate a currently relevant concept of cultural region. The idea of a traditional culture area may be flexible as compared to that of a traditional region, but it still has limited application in the American case. It works better for the years before 1850 than after, and better for east of the Mississippi than west. The idea of nodal regions is, likewise, an ideal type with limited application to the understanding of American cultural regions. It works better for Los Angeles than for Natchez, and says more about migration among the middle class than among the less fortunate and mobile. The emphasis by students of traditional culture areas upon relatively unchanging (often relict) cultural patterns, seems to argue that nothing happens for the first time. The emphasis by students of nodal regions upon economics and the current moment seems to argue that nothing happens twice.

The recent revival of interest in cultural region coincides with a new interest in how tradition and change interact. To illustrate the general principle: Relocation from New England to upstate New York in the years before

<sup>2</sup>Zelinsky (1973), pp.110-113. <sup>3</sup>Zelinsky (1983), 3. <sup>4</sup>Meinig (1966). <sup>5</sup>Borchert (1972). <sup>6</sup>Vance (1987).

the coming of the Erie Canal can be described in traditional terms. Movement into eastern New York came out of western Connecticut, Massachusetts and Vermont, with pioneer migrants shuttling back and forth between the frontier settlements and their homes in western New England. During this pre-canal period, one can represent a New England culture area as having expanded into successively contiguous areas in upstate New York.<sup>7</sup>

With the arrival of the canal, movement became much more varied in pattern and cultural uniformities much more scattershot. People who moved from Vermont into New York could stop in Rochester or Syracuse, but, also, they could go on to Michigan or Illinois. Former New Englanders resident in New York City became increasingly influential in directing cultural and business affairs among their upstate and Upper Midwest "kin." One could say that, because of the canal, patterns of movement along with areal loyalties and interests began to approximate the nodal pattern, becoming more and more dependent upon the development of a hierarchical network of urban centers.<sup>8</sup> But, just as clearly, any such pattern was attended by a geographical clustering of cultural groups, if in a more and more scattershot pattern. Thus Vermonters moving to Michigan tended to search out (often moved with) their own kind.<sup>9</sup> The pattern of the new settlements could be described as a "stretched" and scattershot region, clustered along the southern shores of the Great Lakes, looking to Boston and to the Yankee community in New York City for leadership. The ideal of a "total" region poorly serves this new pattern, in which regional boundaries are porous at best and any cultural homogeneity within boundaries is diluted.

Midwestern settlement in Los Angeles in the early years of this century

more decidedly conforms to a new regional type. For many years Los Angeles was a Midwestern outpost. Almost from the outset, Chicago was known to be the prime market for tourists to southern California. For many years, the Iowa Society, based in southern California, was a force to be reckoned with socially and politically. Long Beach was a center for Iowa settlement, and Bixby Park, in Long Beach, was the site for annual Iowa Day picnics attended by some 150,000 individuals. Pasadena had an Iowa colony of sorts that was dispersed throughout the city and had derived from scattered origins in North-eastern Iowa.<sup>10</sup>

These are, of course, fragments of the total story, but the fragments disclose a kind of regionalization that thoroughly mixes nodal and cultural-traditional patterns. Tourist markets and the general pattern of migration are clearly dependent upon nodally-organized systems of communication and transportation. The particular paths followed (from Iowa to Pasadena or Long Beach, for example) become traditional among particular Iowans, and certain settlements become recognizably Iowan for certain purposes. The resultant regional pattern has little to do with cultural homogeneity and inclusive boundaries. It is dynamic: it obtains for a limited time under specified conditions for a particular subpopulation. It is stretched and scattershot, much more so than the regionalizing that took place among New Englanders settling in the Upper Middle West. Any cultural unities achieved depend in a new way upon mass transportation and mass communication. To some considerable degree, the sense of region is contrived ("invented," to use a currently popular term) by means of organizations, like the Iowa Society, and events, like the picnic.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Ryan (1981), 1; Miller (1979), pp. 20-21.    <sup>8</sup> Ryan (1981), 3; Cross (1950).    <sup>9</sup> Miller (1979), pp. 144-147.

<sup>10</sup> McWilliams (1973), 9; Fogelson (1967), 4; Gjerde (n.d.).    <sup>11</sup> See Hobsbawm (1983), on invention.



Scholars interested in region are trying to understand the implications of this new type of region. An earlier tradition in folklife studies, for example, represented folk (largely rural) tradition as in opposition to urban change, with folk tradition, regrettably, losing out. Folk or vernacular culture is now seen as urban as well as rural, as vital rather than relict or vestigial, and region is one dimension of that vital culture. Process and action (folklorists speak of "performance") become the focus of study rather than timeless tradition. Thus students of contemporary folk music are likely to see the record industry as integral to their topic. Regional concerns remain important in this new approach to folklore, but without their old exclusivity. For any given individual, regional folklore is likely to be appropriate for one kind of occasion, and occupational or recreational folklore might well concern different kinds of occasions and participants.<sup>12</sup> As was mentioned at the outset, landscape study was originally interested in the analysis of rural landscapes. Under the influence of J.B. Jackson particularly, that rural bias is now largely a thing of the past. Present-day studies of the "vernacular" landscape are just as interested in the built environment of the commercial strip as they are in the building traditions of rural Appalachia. Good work has been done on railroad and highway landscapes; suburban, urban and metropolitan landscapes; and, increasingly, touristic and commodified or packaged landscapes.<sup>13</sup> Appreciation of these new types of landscape is, of course, conducive to an appreciation of the new kind of cultural region we have been describing.

Now back to babies and baths. The baby is our necessary connection to place, however mobile our lives. The

bath is the geographical context or region of place-making. We have been emphasizing transformations in regional, folk and landscape studies. The popular wisdom (and much of the scholarly wisdom) has been, and in some degree continues to be, that such changes make concern for place and habitat increasingly irrelevant. If one is futuristically oriented, one may be tempted to predict that the day is not far distant when there will be no sense of place.<sup>14</sup> But there is indeed a baby in the bath.

Humanistically oriented geographers, most notably Yi-Fu Tuan, have come some way in describing how place functions under modern conditions.<sup>15</sup> However often and fast we humans move, we move in relation to an inner geography. That inner geography is the product of a life of negotiations between any given individual and the surrounding (multivocal, ambiguous, in some degree mysterious) environment. Inner geography is not simply a matter of perception or mental maps. It has more to do with the unselfconscious geographical rhythms of everyday life than with moments of geographical awareness.

Place is not a given. It might be better described as a construct. We bring to geographical experience our distinctively human criteria. Distances are distances from the self. We know and need to know most about our immediate surroundings, the arenas of our everyday comings-and-goings (including the rhythms of business and weekend travel). As the geography involved becomes more remote from those comings-and-goings, our knowledge becomes more generalized. Each of our senses makes its own kind of report of our environments: things seen have an objective, perspectival quality, basic to our spatial orientation; things touched are much more immediate

<sup>12</sup> Steiner and Mondale (1988), pp.126-138.

<sup>13</sup> Jackson (1970); Lewis (1983); Hudson (1987); Relph (1987). <sup>14</sup> Meyrowitz (1985).

<sup>15</sup> Tuan (1977); cf. Dovey (1985).

but much more vaguely oriented. We structure our experience in predictable ways: we orient ourselves in space by facing in a particular direction (by analogy, in building and planning we value the fronts of things over their backs); and we "stand up to" experience, valuing the high over the low (so by analogy we rule that no building in Washington, D.C., can be higher than the Capitol).

Most basic to the configuration of our inner geography are our early years. In infancy, the mother is what we know of place. As growing children, we "colonize" nearby space and stake out a territorial range, enlarged year by year. The range supplies the *genius loci* by means of which we as children define ourselves.<sup>16</sup> Many of us move often and far in middle life, and must reconstruct our inner geographies accordingly, and "colonize" new territories, but our later adventures are likely to be defined, at one or another remove, in relation to what we knew as home during those early years. As we age, the range of our everyday rounds begins to decrease, we begin to give a new emphasis to pause and rest (as against adventure), and memories take on a new authority.<sup>17</sup>

These connections among place, habit and habitat obtain in the late twentieth century and in any foreseeable future and are basic to what we make of ourselves and our culture. They relate directly to the new type of region earlier described.

The basic difference between the old type of region and the new is that people (groups, cultures) have become more mobile, and the idea of region must accommodate itself to that basic fact. Our culture has become more migratory. The meaning of migration as habit and habitat is disclosed by a look at the inner geography involved.

An older concept of migration (and immigration) concentrated upon the

"rootedness" of traditional or agrarian life and the "uprootedness" of modern and urban life. In recent years, the focus has changed dramatically to an emphasis upon the connections between culture of origin and culture of arrival, to what might be called "place-on-the-move."<sup>18</sup> Any considerable move involves the exchange of one kind of home for another, and, in terms of inner geography, there are few cultural transactions that are as basic. (There are "inconsiderable" moves from one place to a similar place, what can be called "same place" migration, but that is not our subject here.)

Study of migrant accounts of the experience yields a clear pattern. The old home, in its everydayness, supplied orientation. When a migrant leaves that home behind, he is necessarily disoriented (left "at sea," as we say), and leaves part of himself behind, too. Arrival at the new destination underscores the point. Lacking orientation, he is more or less lost, "neither here nor there." That sense of being neither here nor there lingers on. A considerable move condemns the first-generation migrant to a more or less hyphenated life.

As a counterbalance to disorientation and "hyphenation," migrants cluster. It is a rare individual indeed who strikes out for an entirely strange place. Generally, a migrant stays close to what he knows. If he moves a long distance, he tends to move by "stage" or "step," from a small place to a nearby larger place; or along "chains," paths followed by earlier migrants in his family and/or group. Such cultural clustering, such staying in touch with one's own, is central to the migration experience. A migrant clusters according to what is most immediately familiar, intimate, primordial. Those migrants most threatened by the experience cluster most tightly; those least threatened, especially those with means and education, most loosely; but clustering is what virtually

<sup>16</sup>Shepard (1985). <sup>17</sup>Mondale (1988). <sup>18</sup>I here draw upon work in progress.



all unsettled people do as a substitute for the home left behind. Particular people from a place in Vermont cluster together in their move to a spot in Michigan (and call it Vermontville, maybe); and particular individuals from northeastern Iowa follow family and friends to a particular section of Pasadena. The more particular and detailed the study of migration, the more striking those clustering patterns.

In sum, attention to the inner geography of migration yields a pattern that is altogether congruent with our description of the new type of region. Scholarly and popular habits of mind still tend to think of region in traditional terms, as bounded, inclusive, everlasting. The same habits of mind are likely to celebrate region even as they suppose it to be passing from the scene.<sup>19</sup> A group of humanistic geographers have put aside such habits of mind in reasserting the centrality of place and "whereness" in contemporary everyday life. A new kind of ("outer") cultural region – dynamic, stretched, in some degree a function of advanced systems of transportation and communication, in some degree contrived – is the arena for modern-day place-making and place-related traditions.

Place and region are alive and well. However altered their terms, those concepts (and concern for geography, which studies both) are basic to an understanding of contemporary life and culture.

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# A Thought on Regionalism

*Donald Olsen, FAIA*

Our way of learning is through criticizing and testing hypotheses. This is hardly a satisfactory approach for those who desire to grasp the "whole picture." Holistic world-views are perennially advanced theologically and metaphysically, and may prove comforting to those who fideistically reject further knowledge. Fifty years ago or more certain groups of American architects embraced the concept of regionalism. In time, some of them recognized a dilemma implicit in holism, that is, Dilthey's and others' hermeneutic circle. Roughly, the hermeneutic circle states that the whole can be understood only if we understand the constituent parts, while these parts, in turn, can be understood only if we understand the whole. This led to naive questioning as to whether any proposed building should be built without understanding or considering its role in the region.

Regionalism is one of the more stable of the scores of "isms" influencing the fields of study concerning human habitation and it belongs among the valuable intellectual disciplines of our time. It studies, classifies, and theorizes about the location, distribution, migration, and intermixture of eclectic cultural and ethnic groups and the history of social and cultural life. The earth's diversified physiognomy and climates give rise to a great range of ecologically varied environments. Organic life integrally affects the environment, and its variegations may be called regions. Living organisms explore, enrich, and create environmental niches. The human species creates products of symbolic

value, the origin of which is interpreted and reinterpreted, and, by mutations invented and reinvented time and again. Since it would prove a nearly impossible task to devise a distinct name for every major categorical region and its overlaps, even hyphenated categories and endless sub-regions fail to complete a discrete taxonomical inventory. Statistics provide the quantified aspects of any entity called a region: economic regions, natural resource regions, climatic regions, ethnic regions, political and religious regions, agricultural regions, or industrial regions. The numbers and kinds of regions nearly exhaust the sum of qualifying adjectives. Various social thinkers hold that although one or more of these dominant characteristics may be a necessary condition to define a region, it may not be sufficient to create a balanced and comprehensive life.

Any discussion of the spatial aggregation of people may give the impression that today's population, like those of the past, live in close proximity because of personal and family interdependence and that business trades do so for similar reasons. While certain ethnic groups in the United States still live in spatial proximity and certain religious groups occupy identifiable regions, these aggregations often overlap. But as the result of the relative spatial independence of technical and market information and interchange, the service industry and even much, if not most, of heavy industry, are not necessarily location-dependent. Personal friendships have less to do with physical proximity than with intellectual, technical, scientific, religious, and even

political interests. Friendships can now be carried on by technological communication. Thus the products of culture become by purpose, invention, and design one human complex, geographically separated, but in ever closer interaction. Information is now almost instantaneous worldwide, actual physical objects less so.

But whatever the total of the world's information, and at whatever speed it may be dispensed, no unified source could systematically utilize or evaluate or invent the new, eclectic and perhaps seemingly irrational ideas that spontaneously spring forth without purposeful design. Where a tradition of thought, criticism, argument, and intense competition is great, the probability of innovations in science, art, and technology may be higher, but that in no way predicts a single seminal breakthrough.

Some regions remain quite stable over long periods of time. A few key industries find little reason to move, sometimes even while expanding. Where the communities and the region remain stable and change very little, they are more likely to be perceived as regions, although not necessarily as the place where you may want to live. Regions of large and eclectic populations or of foreign investment such as Los Angeles and New York attract more talent in art, technology, or science than more insular locations. All good things, however, no matter how comprehensively and sensitively planned, inevitably entail unintended consequences, some beneficial, but many unwanted and undesirable. The bigger, the more comprehensive, the more holistic the plan, the more catastrophic the undesirable results, particularly if information and official knowledge are centrally controlled and people act through command. The Soviet Union is the ultimate example of this, but it is only the worst of many others. Even the best of consequential circumstances may yield one or more effects such as inflation,

housing shortages, longer commuting, heavier use of urban services, more pollution, higher taxes, flight of industry and resulting unemployment, and other problems.

No one of intellectual breadth or sensitivity would want a homogenized world, region, or neighborhood, as we are not all the same whether by inheritance or environment. We exhibit many differences in our choices. But if we are not leveled downward, the opportunities exist for imaginative enhancement of many locations not endowed with equal physical beauty. Much of the California coast is considered beautiful, but once it was no more than another section of coastline. The San Francisco Bay, however, formed a natural harbor for the early light draft ships, and its proximity to the gold rush country got the city off to an early start. Banks and wealth accumulated as Henry Miller and others exploited millions of cheaply acquired land-grant acres to create a soil-ruining quick-cash cotton harvest. They established migratory labor armies using many single men left over from the gold rush and the transcontinental railroad construction. The City and the entire Bay Area grew willy-nilly into an identifiable region. Increased wealth produced great patrician houses and a vital commercial city grew. The interaction of humans and the choice of exploitation of natural landscape formed a region. It was this situation that produced such a development, and not some Hegelian historic destiny of civilization at work. Regions don't just exist; they are made, developed, and redeveloped. The results are often depressing. But we must remember that there will *always* be unintended consequences to our best efforts. Our biggest job then becomes the repair of the many unwanted consequences of our development of a better habitat. California is fast reaching that activity as its central endeavor. Its development has come about so fast that it has grown



from adolescence to elderly status without any cultural maturity in between to give it substance. California is now little more than a technological outpost of civilization, but given its variety, growing population, and possibilities of economic expansion, truly exciting opportunities exist for a pluralistic community of diversified regions. California holds the promise of creating a comprehensive civilization at a more rapid pace than has been achieved anywhere else in the past.

So far, regionalism has been treated academically as the description of a loosely defined phenomenon. It has long been proposed that regionalism should be institutionalized and empowered with governmental authority. It is often portrayed as a less arbitrary and a more natural district of regulation. But if a region transcends city, county, or state boundaries, additional levels of government administration may be required, including federal involvement. I am skeptical of the value, the bureaucracy, the tax cost, and the political machinations of an additional layer of authority.

Architecture will of necessity be a part of cultural growth, along with music and the other arts. Its quality will fluctuate up and down with world trends. But on the subject of regionalism, architecture, and especially its avant-garde fads, is a minimal issue. The scale of large urban-design projects will affect urban appearances, but much depends on the investment climate, which is variable over time. An active building period is as likely to produce stereotyped overall urban design projects as it is to induce hackneyed architectural components. If regionalism should strive to promote a higher quality of architecture, it ought to be encouraged. But how can that be accomplished, and at what cost to whom? Although done with all good intentions, further coercion by authority hardly evokes enthusiasm on any side of

the question, except for those do-gooders who can afford to invest their time in their constitutionally-protected lobby hobby. If the continuation and further entrenchment of architectural control boards or of San Francisco's "Ministry of Silly Tops" constitute official encouragement of better architecture (via an official interpretation of regionalism), any contemplated establishment of further authority should be questioned. The mere banality we previously enjoyed has been in recent years reduced by such authorities to grotesque comedy. Before another layer of authority is enacted, it should be prevented from attempting to convert us from our previously endearing banality and our more recent exposure to the grotesque, and from leading us on further to "the doom of nonsense, violence, and triviality" that overtakes "a civilization in which the whole natural order is abrogated."<sup>1</sup>

If regionalism promotes cultural growth reconciled with technological advance, rather than merely creating another level of bureaucracy, then it is a positive development, although I am far from sanguine about such a prospect. We would do well to avoid holistic approaches with their propensity to create unintended consequences of catastrophic proportion. Support for remedial programs and technologies that promote public safety and health, including pollution control, seem reasonable goals. A minimum of government interference through arbitrary rules concerning architecture would diminish the cost and time and detrimental results of coercion. Most importantly, if the establishment of regional authority occurs, it must take place with maximum individual freedom under rule of law. Then we as professionals and thinking citizens may survive while continuing to resist the plethora of pop apocalyptic "isms," as well as the "messiahs of the month" who

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<sup>1</sup> Sayers (1950), 269. *The Images*. Commentary to Canto XXXI (*The Giants*).

(and architects yet!) so valiantly strive,  
through deeper insights into the essence  
of words, for a new cosmic salvation.

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# Culture and Nature in California

*Garrett Eckbo, FASLA*

California can be divided into two primary natural/cultural regions north and south of the Tehachapi Mountains. They include five subregions: North Coast and San Francisco Bay from Eureka to Lompoc; South Coast from Santa Barbara to San Diego; Central Valley from Redding to Bakersfield; South Interior, from Death Valley to El Centro; and the Sierra, Tehachapi and Coast Ranges which bound these four.

Regions and subregions can be distinguished in terms of topography, ecology, climate and culture. The north/south distinction is political as well: the north has two-thirds of the land and one-third of the population; the south has one-third of the land and two-thirds of the population. Culturally, the subregions center naturally on cities: north on San Francisco Bay, south on Los Angeles, Central Valley on Sacramento, Fresno and Bakersfield, south interior on the developing strip from Palm Springs to the Salton Sea. The mountain ranges have recreation parks and facilities such as Lake Tahoe, Yosemite and Kings Canyon/Sequoia. A cultural region tells us what it is about as we move through its buildings, streets, topography, advertising, vehicles, parks and plazas. The arrangement of these elements on the land creates three-dimensional spatial sequences whose continuities and interruptions constitute the essence of urban/exurban experience. As we elect to live and work in a particular area, social experience builds and conditions our attitude toward pristine environmental experience.

Regional expression emerges both clearly and subtly in an analysis of



**Fresno Mall. Garrett Eckbo, landscape architect. Photo by Tidymen Studios.**

planting patterns. In the north, redwood, live oak, Monterey pine and cypress reflect misty, foggy, cloudy atmosphere, at times too dark and wet for some. In the south, rubber trees, jacarandas, lemon gums, olive and coral trees create a more lively, festive atmosphere, while palms spread tropical illusions. In shrubbery, pyracantha, cotoneaster, laurel and tobira create backgrounds more subdued than the hibiscus, bougainvilleas, lantana and plumbago of the south. But the contrasting plant groups overlap and merge easily, with richer and more complex effects. In the mountains, native manzanita, ceanothus, romneya, fremontia and other chaparral mix with elegant forests that combine deciduous and evergreen and tie the state together in exemplary unity. It is possible to use planting to emphasize division or unity.





Ambassador College. Garrett Eckbo, landscape architect.

In the areas of urban design and planning, we have yet to achieve that balance with equal respect for the past, the present and the future. The reenactment of the past insults the present and future; Modern architecture expressed the present and future but ignored the past; Post-modernism tried to appease all three to end up with an indigestible hodge-podge. In the San Francisco area, the basic elements of regional quality were set for us by Nature. From Berkeley, we admire the panoramic view across the bay to San Francisco, the Marin Hills and Mt. Tamalpais. When we come down into the streets and flatlands, traffic, noise, smog and hazards to life and limb take over; the glamour of the panorama becomes a little tarnished, as brown intrudes into the blue and white.

The San Francisco Bay urban complex now extends ninety miles from Petaluma to beyond San Jose and sixty miles from San Francisco to Stockton and Lodi. Sacramento, only ten more miles away, is a growing metropolis in its own right. San Jose has joined San Francisco and Oakland as the third major city on

the Bay. The San Francisco/Oakland/Berkeley urban triangle, linked by the Bay Bridge, remains the regional center. The neat visual geography of the Bay and its enclosing hills is breached by the unrelenting pressure of automotive traffic spreading from employment centers to the cheaper housing fringes, where alarm clocks go off at 4 AM on week days. The freeway and the auto are destroying the environmental integrity of the region while government and business continue to ignore the basic relations between home, work, play and service.

As time goes by and development proliferates, the Bay and Los Angeles areas become more and more like each other. The Los Angeles urban complex spreads sixty miles from Newhall to Newport Beach and the same from Long Beach to San Bernardino/Redlands. Only Camp Pendleton prevents the merging of urban coastal development between Los Angeles and San Diego. It is easy to envision a future megalopolis covering the 160 miles from Malibu to the Mexican border. The same carelessness applied in endless repetition in a Southland that is larger in area and less



ingratiating in detail, has given us those urban/suburban scenes we love to hate.

But if one doubts the original Los Angeles potential for magnificence, one has only to go to Griffith Park. From there, one can move south on Western Avenue in a straight line 45 miles to San Pedro and the harbor. Le Notre and Louis XIV could have produced a magnificent vista of a central parkway flanked by boulevards that would have justified the ultimate Los Angeles. But our city builders tended to be more concerned with quantity than quality and sameness is relieved only by occasional flashes of imagination.

Hidden in this urban/suburban jungle are the fragments of culture, old and new, that make it possible for us to survive the cacophony of sound and fury of the free market landscape. Outside our cities lie the agricultural/natural greenbelts where we can recoup vital energies. We must unfortunately rely on federal, state and county governments for the preservation of these retreats. While the achievement of a balance in the built environment should be the job of planning agencies, in the final analysis, its quality depends on architects, landscape architects and clients with taste and good judgment.

A close review of the recent "Visionary San Francisco" exhibit forces us to the conclusion that the real giants were the original Beaux Arts visionaries. They saw cities and landscapes as they could be rather than as they probably had to be. Never built, those 19th and early 20th century illusions lacked the power to inspire the makers of our cities. The quality of our future environments will rely on inspiring bold visions that balance the relations between free market systems and coherent design and planning. We still need those true builders sought by Mark Helprin, but they seem to be less and less available. The current images of Renewal and Growth, described by Sally Woodbridge,

are shrunken visions. The great Beaux Arts beginnings are gone, replaced by more practical and meager proposals which have restricted survival potentialities. We seem to have become more restricted and miserly as we grow richer.

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# An Architecture of Purpose

## *The California State Office Building Program*

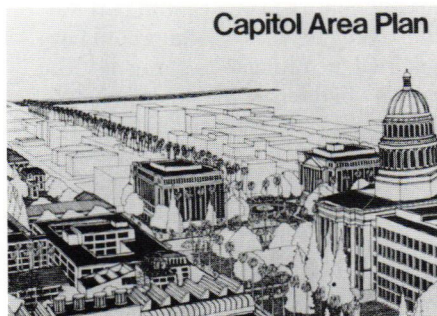
Barry Wasserman, FAIA

For me, the first criterion for every building is “Why am I going to do it? Why is it so important to do?” And then there will (emerge) an idea ...

Herman Hertzberger<sup>1</sup>

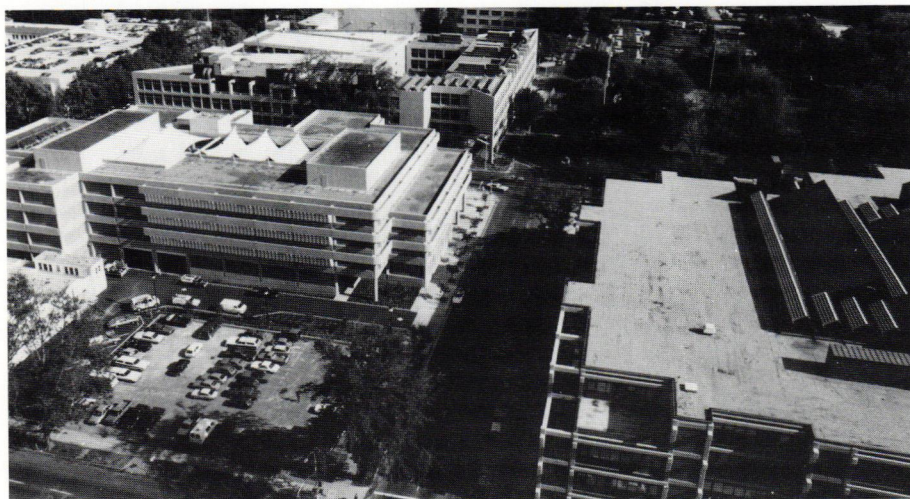
How does architecture create a “sense of place” that is rooted in its specific context? In California today we confront a built environment whose homogeneity throughout our cities, suburbs, and even rural towns contradicts our diverse landscape, culture and people.

The Office of the State Architect, under Sim van der Ryn, started the California State Office Building Program in 1975 with a mandate from Governor Edmund G. Brown Jr. that had as one of its explicit goals the development of an architecture responsive to the present



and future needs of Californians. It was to be an architecture of place, an architecture of purpose, an architecture of meaning that promoted positive solutions to a set of important public policy issues.

Broadly speaking, these issues were the quality of urban life, the conservation of our non-renewable resources, the



California Energy Commission, Paul R. Bonderson and Gregory Bateson Buildings.

<sup>1</sup> Interview by Jim Givens (1988), *Avenue*, vol. 17, 6, Journal of the AAA School, University of Oregon.



quality of the workplace, and the deteriorating perception of the value of government services. They were issues whose resolution would clearly have an impact on the quality of life for many Californians.

Prior to any building design, the Capitol Area Plan for Sacramento was developed as a model for the rejuvenation of part of an urban core area. It stressed mixed use, the development of a 24-hour-a-day community, an open space and public amenities scheme, a housing regeneration element, an energy conservation strategy and a transportation plan that lessened reliance on the private automobile. The Capitol Area Plan was developed from 1975-77 and enacted into law in 1978. It created a generic and specific (for Sacramento) framework for design. The Office Building Program led to the eventual construction of 11 buildings for over 12,000 employees within urban core areas. Two more buildings are currently in the design development stage.

As building programs were developed, four major elements emerged as the key design determinants: Urban Response, User Need Response, Energy Use Response and Imagery.

### Urban Response

California is an ever urbanizing place. There was public recognition of the need

to regenerate California's urban cores, particularly those areas falling or fallen into decay. There was also concern that the emerging urban fringe and the existing urban edge (suburbia) needed to be treated in a fashion that prevented a deterioration of the quality of life.

Our building programs called for the introduction of mixed-use areas, a progression from public to private space, a contextual scale, a reinforcement of the streetscape, and an environment supportive of intimacy. We stressed opportunities for the natural emergence of what Randy Hester called "sacred spaces" for incremental growth, an emphasis on pedestrian movement, and a sensitivity to the existing urban fabric, its structures, and its open spaces.

### Response to User Needs

Three constituencies were represented in the users' group: the contractual client, the building occupants and the visiting public. For the client, space had to be flexible, but flexibility was explored in terms of office clusters and their organizational needs – not as a simple floor plate size analysis. Clear circulation was a requirement for the client and occupant user, for whom we developed the definition of a humane environment. Natural light, outside awareness, minimum corridors, a sense of individual control over individual environmental



California Energy Commission, Sacramento. Office of the State Architect and Nacht and Lewis, Architects, Sacramento.





**California Energy Commission, Sacramento. Office of the State Architect and Nacht and Lewis, Architects, Sacramento.**

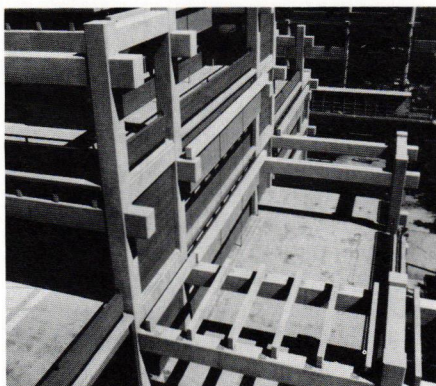
conditions were emphasized. For the public, the issue was organizational understanding of the building, a clear entry sequence.

### **Energy Use Response**

In response to the energy crisis of 1974 and increasing environmental concerns, there was a commitment to demonstrating that our built environment could be designed using more efficient energy strategies without compromising user comfort or use. The building programs and their implementation demanded more integrated architect/engineer participation during the design process. Design strategies utilizing site climate conditions were promoted, as well as those requiring life cycle cost analyses, lighting load reductions, lower energy budget targets, and energy management control options. Goals stressed less consumption and more conservation.

As we worked with and participated in design teams, we kept noting the importance of synthesis. Visually integrated energy design strategies

created humanizing image options. Buildings could make some non-alienating statements – government is run by real people; energy conservation can be a reasonable building strategy. Sensitivity to urban context and scale could support client organizational needs. Building configurations could have some degree of complexity and still work. Innumerable other instances occurred that made clear that dealing concurrently with these four program



**Gregory Bateson Building, Sacramento. Office of the State Architect.**



issues throughout the design phase allowed the architects to make rational trade-offs and design decisions that lead to an architecture of place, an architecture of purpose.

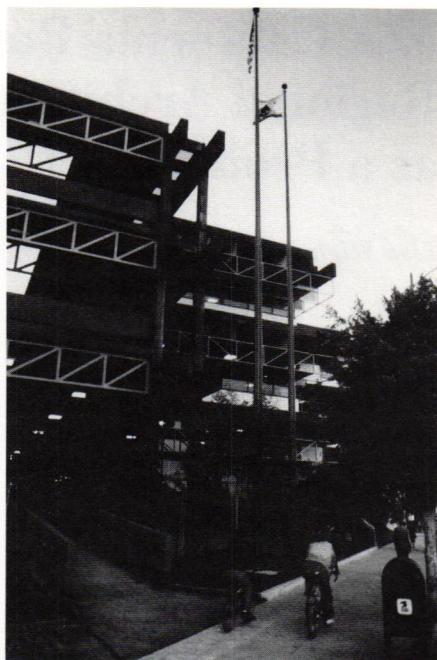
### Imagery

These were public buildings that had to be inviting and friendly. There were too many precedents that increased the public's sense of alienation from their government. A diminished reliance on monumentality was stressed – openness, human scale, warm materials. Visible art enhancement, dignity, and response to place were directions for exploration. An understanding of local building traditions and images and collective memory was a prerequisite to starting the creative process.

Today, a visitor walking the area south and west of the Capitol encounters buildings in an environment that has reinforced the essence of place that exists in Sacramento. The Bateson, Energy Commission, Water Resources, and Employment Development office buildings, the PERS-commissioned Lincoln Plaza and even the new housing surrounding Washington Park are the results of a successful process that had as its primary goal the achievement of the program objectives described. The recently completed designs for the new State Archives/Secretary of State Building and new State Library Annex will reinforce this environment.

This same construction would engender a different response if built somewhere else in the state, but the underlying program and attention to its issues would lead to solutions rooted in that place. Our architecture should reflect this strength. We, as architects, must deal with the developing pattern of an anonymous environment that is not differentiated by where it is, who uses it, or what it should do.

California is perhaps the most diverse social experiment of its time. Its



**State Office Building, Long Beach. Gibbs and Wing Architects, Long Beach.**

citizens live in an incredibly rich physical and social environment. But Californians must conserve non-renewable resources, protect the environment, and demand additions to the urban fabric that will improve a rapidly deteriorating quality of life. We must demand constructed environments that we, as users, feel are not only non-alienating but beneficial to the way we spend our daily lives, and should desire an aesthetic that uplifts our spirits.

This State Office Building Program produced a public architecture from the symbiotic relationship that can exist between environmental, sociological, and aesthetic goals. The design approach described herein offers some useful clues and guidance to developing an architecture of place, an architecture of purpose.

# The California Bungalow: Regional Architecture as a Product of Its Time

*Lisa Wightman, AIA*

Regionalism, as it applies to an architectural style or building type, is a function of its time. If regional architectural styles are born from indigenous or architect-inspired housing types, then this is exemplified in the history of southern California architecture. Massive population growth and development has intensified our traditionally eclectic built environment and amplified what is generally considered to be a disastrous urban fabric. However, for those who would dismiss all which presently exists and attempt to invent, import or define a new regional model, I offer this food for thought: the California bungalow style is a product of regional history and contains a conceptual basis which was appropriate and successfully relevant in its time. By re-examining the California bungalow, we can discover why its development into a regional vernacular style was so successful and perhaps find clues for solutions to some current dilemmas.

The bungalow is so widespread and common throughout southern California that it is often ignored as a viable architectural model. The style overwhelmingly symbolizes "home" and was not well-served by other building types. It should be considered vernacular because, although its antecedents were borrowed from all over the world, it coalesced as a style here, due to the sociological, economic and environmental factors of the time. The bungalow created a sense of place, and to this day recalls that era to us.

The California bungalow flourished from about 1905 to 1930. In the early years of this century, many progressive social movements were under way: health cults, women's suffrage, progressive democracy, the arts and crafts movement, labor unions, the Chatauqua, etc. The optimistic spirit of the times encouraged imagination and invention in all walks of life. Popular philosophical movements advocated personal freedom, a love of natural beauty, and liberal intellectual explorations. Thomas Edison, Henry Ford, John Muir, Teddy Roosevelt, the Wright brothers and Theodore Dreiser were all active during this time. The idea of a new century filled people with the desire to create a new way of life, a utopia. The feeling was strong that any dream was possible to achieve. The bungalow can be seen as the architectural manifestation of an intellectual ideal. Simply built, with an obvious hand-crafted quality, functional, open to its natural surroundings, and friendly yet detached, the bungalow embodied the myth of casual California living which is still prevalent today. The



**Bungalow, Santa Monica.**



bungalows were also seen as a democratic, socially progressive, neighborly, un-self-conscious yet self-confident housing type, and this was reinforced by their stylistic elements. Perhaps most importantly for its inhabitants, the bungalow, in its time, symbolized a civilized lifestyle. Whether seen as modest or temporary, it was considered respectable and was attainable by the average person.

As a reaction against Victorian ostentatiousness and urban industrial blight, there was a strong movement at the turn of the century for a return to a romantic ideal of a genteel semi-rural style of living. There was also a great



**Bungalow, Highland Park.**

westward migration from the east and midwest. Both young and old were coming to California to enjoy the mild climate, the space and light, the availability of abundant inexpensive land, and the chance to take part in a new Utopia. Heavy marketing in the east promoted visions of suburban bungalow-lined streets, which soon came to symbolize southern California. Billed as artistic yet simple, inexpensive yet autonomous, one could send away for plans or a kit and build one's own bungalow, or buy one in the many developers' tracts or courts. This became known as the "Bungalow Craze," and hundreds of thousands of bungalows were built throughout southern California.

The bungalow, as a house type, was ideal for the region during this time. With ample room to spread out, these little homesteads allowed their owners to participate in the well promoted back-

to-nature, anti-urban dream. In the Los Angeles area an extensive and efficient electric trolley system was built to carry these new suburbanites to their jobs downtown. Later, as the automobile also came into widespread use, developments were built further from the city center. The bungalow tracts were the first instances of Los Angeles' legendary suburban sprawl. People could have the best of both worlds by working in the city yet returning home to their own personal "natural" paradise.

Both the British and American arts and crafts movements, most familiarly promoted by Gustav Stickley and John Ruskin, provided the conceptual basis for the California bungalow style. These movements promoted lifestyle as an art: integrating culture, architecture, literature, landscape and the fine arts. In the 19th century, the British had developed a housing type which was called a bungalow, and was mainly used in rural areas as a simple second home. As the British arts and crafts movement became more popular, these little houses were often used to display the integration of art and living as designed by William Morris, M.H. Baillie-Scott, C.F.A. Voysey, Charles Rennie Mackintosh and W.R. Lethaby. Back-to-naturism and the interest in eclectic sources began here. Plan layout and interior design were the main British influences.

The quoting of diverse sources was a romanticized Anglo notion which corresponded quite well with the intellectual concepts of the arts and crafts movement. The original building form has been traced back to native housing types in India ("bungalow" is derived from "bangala," meaning "of Bengal"). During the British occupation of India in the 18th- and 19th-centuries, this form was used for temporary shelters and storage buildings. The basic elements of the bungalow style, the inherent horizontality, low-slung roof with wide eaves, simple massing and construction and

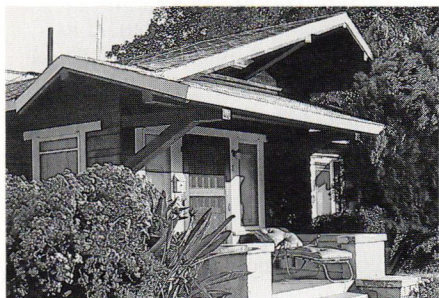


open verandah, responded to the regional climate and topography of the region. The form of the Indian prototype next appeared during the early 19th century in English pavilions and villas, when "orientalizing" was popular.

Due to their masterful articulation of wood construction, simplicity and craftsmanship, traditional Swiss and Japanese housing styles were of particular interest to the California bungalow builders. The Swiss chalet is characterized by an overscaled exposed wood structure which becomes a decorative element of the facade. Hand-carved

were designed for casual, simple living with big open porches and wood construction. The popular Shingle Style of the era promoted the interest in material and texture. However, the bungalow as a style did not flourish in the east due to the harsher climate and the fact that more people were interested in the then-popular period revival styles. The arts and crafts movement in America was popularized by Stickley's *Craftsman* magazine, where the idea of something being hand-made was glorified, as was the nobility of the craftsman. Interiors were seen as an integral part of any building design.

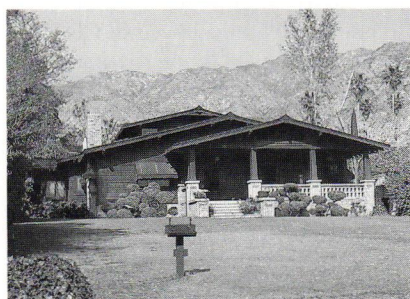
The concurrent midwestern Prairie style also influenced the development of the bungalow style. The low-slung, heavy roof with extended eaves and the horizontality of the building form was known in California. Frank Lloyd Wright was the Prairie style's most effective proponent and he was then intensely interested in Japanese art and architecture as well as "organic" architecture. Contemporary architecture in California which influenced the bungalow style was of course strongest in Greene and Greene's work. Japanese references, detailing and hand-craftsmanship were refined to an exquisite degree. Their work can be seen as the elite version of the California bungalow style. In southern California, the bungalow style was more integrated with its setting, more rooted to the landscape. Inevitably, as any good regional model does, the California bungalow



**Roof detail from bungalow in Bowen Court, Pasadena, c. 1912. Arthur S. Heineman, architect.**

wood details and wide gable roofs also related Swiss architecture to the bungalows. Japanese wood buildings provided the most obvious and inspiring source for the bungalow style, and this is nowhere more evident than in the work of Greene and Greene. At the turn of the century, interest in all things Japanese was very high. The exaggerated articulation of simple post and beam wood construction was a major influence; the beauty of wood joinery, straightforward details, and expression of the qualities of the building materials in traditional Japanese architecture had never been so appreciated in the west before the California bungalow.

The first "bungalows" in America were built on the east coast in the mid to late 19th century. These were also situated in resort areas and though perhaps more akin to the saltbox, they



**Bungalow, Altadena, c. 1911.**



spread throughout the country and became a veritable American house type.

As time went on and the bungalow became ubiquitous in southern California, people started to “modernize” it by applying various revival style facades. Mission, Spanish Colonial, Neo-classical, English Cottage, Tudor, Pueblo and Egyptian were the most popular. This facade-ism was really the antithesis of what the craftsman bungalow’s integration had been all about. The economic boom of the roaring 20s inspired materialism and nouveau-riche dreams. The “high-thinking” humbleness of the bungalow was soon seen as a quaint anachronism. Being seen as old-fashioned is not a trait that most southern Californians have traditionally embraced. The original immigrants had become more affluent and wanted to trade up to something “better.” Architects and developers were looking to modern European and historic sources for their inspiration. In the Jazz Age, progressive democracy gave way to individualism and one-upmanship. A more literal revivalism became de rigueur: build a “real” hacienda or chateau rather than a bungled bungalow version. Eclecticism became a direct quotation, not a local translation. The era was over, but abstracted elements of the style have cropped up in subsequent regional stylistic developments, as in ranch-style tract houses, some Case Study houses, and Sea Ranch.

The California bungalow, as a style, represents basic ideals in domestic architecture. It is useful to analyze the elements of the style in order to see how well the concepts were achieved architecturally. The bungalow’s intimate scale, craftsmanship, structural clarity at even the simplest level, and connection with its natural surroundings are recognizable to anyone. The style was integrated inside and out in even the most modest bungalows. The bungalow was designed to be functional and convenient

in order to support a casual, straightforward, freely inventive lifestyle. The style was executed more for the pleasure of the inhabitants than for the message of its public face. The style is more concerned with the *user*, with being friendly and connected to its neighbors and not being impressive or intimidating. When one enters a California bungalow, the overwhelming feeling is welcoming, of comfort and peace both in character and scale, yet with great style.

The horizontality of the California bungalow is a reflection of the shape of the land and serves to root the building to the earth and reinforce its connection with its natural surroundings. The roof is the organizing element. It is an appropriate response to a warm climate and brings the scale down to a human, intimate level. The covered porch provides an informal transitional entry space as well as a protected outdoor room. But perhaps its most important defining element is its crafted aspect, the obvious love for natural materials and finishes, simple construction and exaggeration of exposed structural members. One can see how the pieces were joined and can thus read the carpenter’s handiwork: the human connection between process and object. The typical bungalow floor plan reinforced the conceptual notions of informality and user comfort, rooms were meant for real family living.



Exaggerated structure on a bungalow porch, Venice.

A literal revival of the California bungalow style would be inappropriate and irrelevant today. In less than a hundred years the needs of the environment and inhabitants of the region have become antithetic to what they were during the bungalow craze, though the desires may still be the same. The energy and environmental crises caused by unchecked suburban sprawl have extinguished belief in the possibility of creating a utopia here. The ever-accelerating pace of life, the pressures of burgeoning population, and the developers' drive for maximized profit have led to faster and cheaper building techniques. Whereas earlier immigrants came here to help create a new culture, today's immigrants are coming here to join something already established. The hopeful feeling of opportunity is still there, but it is more materialistic than utopian. More profoundly, today's population is much more diverse and the new immigrants are coming from all over the world. The implications of this are intensely exciting, if eclecticism is still to be the hallmark of our regional architecture. We now have a population which can bring diverse global cultural source models to the region based on direct experience and understanding rather than from the filter of scholarly interest. Latin American and Pacific rim immigrants, women and minorities, are constituencies whose power is and will continue influencing regional architecture.

Everyone acknowledges our region's current need to densify, conserve and rehab. Today's context certainly brings into question the need to perpetrate and perpetuate the single family dwelling as a housing model (although the bungalow court was a successful, friendly method of denser development). Precisely because we are in an environmental and socio-economic tailspin, the popular mood is promoting a "kinder, gentler" era, pro-environmentalism, pro-conservation, the nesting syndrome, more self-sufficiency,

and an anti-materialist backlash against the excesses of the 1980s. This same mood, minus perhaps our sense of the enormity and interrelatedness of global problems, existed in 1905. If the bungalow answered the needs of so many in its time, can we look at how that was accomplished and apply it to our time?

Perhaps the bungalow's success was due to a general belief in a common goal. Of course, in a much smaller and more homogenous community, this can occur. In our significantly more diverse and segregated population, both ethnically and economically, defining common goals could be a futile task. But would it? Can we so easily afford to dismiss the future while only looking at our present needs and desires? Isn't that how we got into our present mess? The majority of the contemporary architectural press glorifies individual "artists" and would have us believe that the vanity of merely satisfying personal visions somehow ennoble the profession. The facile shallowness of this point of view, which so well parallels other trends of the 1980s, is quickly coming into focus. On a broader level, society's environmental and socio-economic concerns are demanding far more visionary leadership and regional consciousness in all walks of life, including architecture. Whether or not we are capable of defining and responding to these yearnings in these times is another matter.

The question of whether there is even a need or desire for a regional vernacular style is important. What can a product of "our time" be when the notion of time itself is vastly different? Los Angeles is still inventing and re-defining itself: even who "we" are is constantly changing. It can be argued that universal urbanism has removed us from the quaint idea of vernacularism. In our historical moment where television allows hundreds of millions across a nation or a continent to absorb the same "cultural communiques," our sense of a regional



“place” may indeed soon be anachronistic. Sadly, this would remove the human connection to the local environment and further diminish the quality of life. As we hurtle toward the 21st century, we continue to hear society’s familiar complaint that architects are ever more irrelevant in solving our urban ills. Perhaps the emotional content and humanism of a style that reflects the needs of the region, as did the California bungalow, might just provide us with some common ground for a meaningful dialogue.

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# Visions and Subdivisions: *Sunset* and the California Ranch House

Daniel P. Gregory

Wide whitewalls flash in the sunlight. A substantial, sleek, porpoise-contoured 1956 Buick convertible sweeps up the driveway and into the carport. The driver gets out and walks briskly up the covered, aggregate walkway, past vigorous stands of New Zealand flax in raised beds, and opens the front door. His house is a modern California dream unfolding before him: spacious, angled, flowing; a zig-zag meander along the slope; built-in furniture to the left and right. At one end of the living room, sliding glass doors open to the bougainvillea-framed patio, where the family gathers around a smoking barbecue sunk in the flagstone floor.

This is the kind of image that you could find in many shelter publications of the 1950s, but especially in *Sunset*, "The Magazine of Western Living." Indeed, I think you could say that during the 1950s and 60s *Sunset* embodied the suburban ideal. It is still perceived as a primarily suburban magazine today.

Started in 1898 by the Southern Pacific Railroad as a vehicle to lure travelers west (and thus buy more railroad tickets), it became a literary magazine in the Teens and Twenties. Nearly bankrupt by 1928, it was sold to Lawrence W. Lane, who had been an advertising salesman for Meredith Publishing Company (publishers of *Better Homes and Gardens*, among other titles) in Des Moines, Iowa. Lane recast

the magazine as an action-oriented publication keyed to telling readers how to make the most out of life in the West. With true entrepreneurial insight he perceived two things from the outset: that Western differences – such as climate and scenery – were marketable, and that the population was only just beginning to grow. As an advertising man he knew his market: the western homeowner.

He addressed homeowners directly, and even lyrically, in a February, 1929, editorial where he characterized the powerful sentiment and imagery that derived from turning a house into a home, a process that *Sunset* would record monthly ever after:

The simple call of home, when the sun goes down, sends everyone hurrying toward his own home as no entertainment in the world could cause people to hurry. And this is a daily scene. Sunset hour is the high spot in each day's activities. It is the curtain between work and rest, between anxiety and peace, between ambition and contentment. All our effort and thought during the busy hours of office work or housework are, whether we are conscious of the fact or not, a preparation for the evening hours when we are all at home together again. Sunset is a glorious time, and a glorious word, for "sunset" means "home".<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Sunset*, (1929, February) p. 6.



From its inception, the magazine searched for houses that would exemplify regional characteristics. By the mid 1930s it had found a house type that was literally built-to-suit: the custom-designed suburban ranch house. It was Eureka! The low slung, shallow-gabled, and rambling profile; the large expanses of plate glass under extended eaves; the link to patios and pergolas and breezeways and barbecues – like the house described at the beginning of this article – all added up to a memorable popular image of what a contemporary western house should be, especially during the great building boom following the Second World War when subdivisions surged across the West.

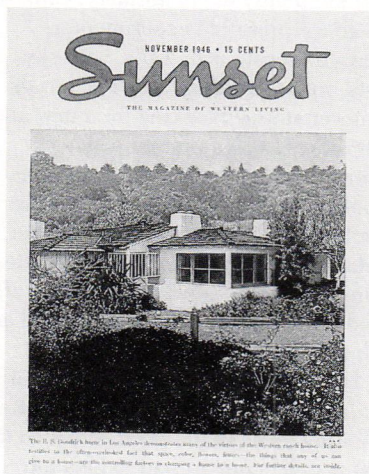
Open to the out-of-doors and infinitely expandable, the ranch house was, at its best, a dwelling of possibility and optimism, a dwelling that seemed to celebrate “westernness” and “Californian-ness” and modernity all at once. Its loose and often asymmetrical plan and expressive use of natural materials gave

physical expression to an informal, easy-going, outdoor-oriented lifestyle.

The ranch house embodied regional identity on two counts: it had a sense of history and even romance through its links by imagery and name to early California rancho life, and it seemed to take advantage of the benign western climate with its indoor-outdoor living areas. The ranch house could be contemporary without being bizarre, functional without being mechanistic, and always it seemed to allow for and encourage the way people really wanted to live here in the West. In a 1946 article entitled “What is a ranch house?” *Sunset* asserted: “It (the ranch house) has never known a set style. It was shaped by needs for a special way of living – informal yet gracious.”<sup>2</sup>

### ***Sunset* Magazine and Cliff May**

Much of the popular success of the ranch house stemmed from the engaging personality and canny salesmanship of its most visible proponent: Southern California band-leader turned designer-developer Cliff May. When *Sunset* found him it hit editorial pay dirt and started mining the vein immediately, publishing many of his houses in the magazine. In 1946, just in time to meet the pent-up demand for housing caused by the War, the magazine’s then parent, Lane Publishing Company, brought out a remarkably successful book called *Western Ranch Houses* written by Cliff May and *Sunset* editor Walter Doty, which sold an unprecedented 50,000 copies and effectively codified essential ranch house characteristics.<sup>3</sup> And in 1950 the magazine made its ultimate commitment to Cliff May and the ranch house by commissioning him to design an overscaled version of one for its new



**Southern California house designed by Cliff May. *Sunset* (November 1946).**

<sup>2</sup> *Sunset*, (1946, November) pp. 26-7.

<sup>3</sup> May, Cliff and the editors of *Sunset* Magazine (1946). *Western Ranch Houses*. Menlo Park: Lane Publishing. Plans and photographs of houses by Cliff May, William Wurster and others. The book was later revised and became Cliff May’s *Western Ranch Houses* (1958). The revised version contains Cliff May designs only.

headquarters, occupied to this day, in suburban Menlo Park.

Here's one of *Sunset's* earliest references to May, in the issue for March of 1936: "Cliff May captures the past in structures that please the present. He wants the country places of Southern California to wear the careless aristocratic air of the old ranchos, so he builds places like this. They ramble almost to the point of departure, with lines as natural and satisfying as those of the hills."<sup>4</sup>

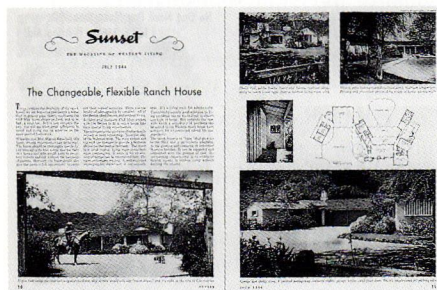
That is a remarkable debut. It sums up much of what May was about and gives a good indication of why he would become so popular with the editors, the publishers and the readers of *Sunset*. Cliff May was exuberantly western, and he made houses that looked as though they belonged here. He was romantic yet practical, able to adapt from the past to enliven the present. And his architecture became landscape architecture very quickly, taking advantage of the climate

Cliff May special attention. One can see at least seven reasons for May's starring role in the pages of *Sunset*, and his subsequent impact on California's suburban landscape.

(1) His work was romantic. No matter how modern it got, it never abandoned a sense of western romance. Ramona and rancho life remained rich regional sources of imagery no matter how fictional they might have been and no matter how technologically innovative and sophisticated his automatic skylights and indoor fountains became. With the arrival of plate glass he helped redefine the window as a window wall – very much a modernist thing to do – but he never abandoned mass; the heft of history always lingered, tying his hearths to the earth even as the rest of the house wandered away into a lush tropical landscape.

(2) He was an inventor. As a magazine offering practical "how-to" advice to the homeowner, *Sunset* has since the late 1920s been interested in inventions or techniques for making a house function more efficiently or comfortably. Cliff May was an irrepressible experimenter, always tinkering with walls, with skylights, with technology, with materials. He never stopped looking for a new and better way to solve problems. It's a Jeffersonian quality that the magazine promotes to this day: you can improve your house and even make it a "home" by doing it yourself. Do-it-yourself ideas poured off May's drawing board and all an editor had to do was stand around and pick them up.

(3) His house plans emphasized informality and comfort. For a magazine devoted to finding ideas of the greatest use to the most people, comfort had to be a top priority. And one of the ways western lifestyles seemed to differ from those in the east was in their greater informality: the ready wave, the sizzling barbecue.



Ranch house article extolling the flexible nature of the ranch house. *Sunset* (July, 1944).

and topography to double the living area by shaping outdoor space, artfully blurring the distinction between inside and outside.

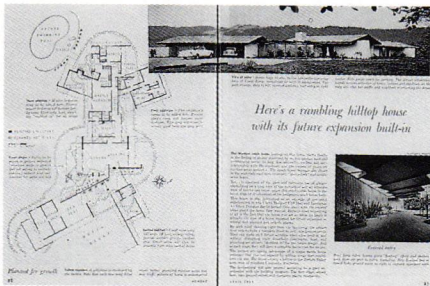
Cliff May's work contained all the elements that *Sunset* was looking for. And while *Sunset* published many houses by such well known architects as William Wurster, Gardner Dailey, Harwell Harris, and Richard Neutra, the magazine gave

<sup>4</sup>*Sunset*, (1936, March) p. 21. I am grateful to Jody Greenwald, Cliff May's biographer, for bringing this citation to my attention.



(4) His designs emphasized function and use over any sophisticated notion of style. The magazine's interest in reporting the practical and a point of view that saw household problems as challenges awaiting the appropriate solution made questions of architectural theory secondary, if not irrelevant.

(5) His houses appeared to be endlessly flexible and expandable. He insisted on master-planning the house to allow for future growth and changing needs. In a rapidly developing region, the concept of expansion became very attractive indeed. The magazine wanted to tell its readers how to think ahead, to help them understand that with a plan they could add-on or remodel when they could afford it.



**Article on master-planning the ranch house, showing a Northern California house designed by Cliff May for members of the family who owned *Sunset* (April 1958, pp. 80-81). The photographs in this article form the basis for my description in the opening paragraph.**

(6) A walk through a Cliff May ranch house wasn't just a walk, it was a ramble; a ramble into nature, or a big-band two-step to the choreography of Hermes-Pan. The front door opened to a private outdoor world. *Sunset* magazine was in the business of reporting gardens as well as houses. Here was a designer who made them inseparable. In Cliff May's hands the entire site became part of the design; some rooms just happened to be outside.

(7) May was a western personality; a latter-day alcalde, whose zest for life was contagious. Horses and riding were part of his blood, and are themselves a highly reportable vision of western life.

Stables often appeared as part of his ranch house complexes. As fellow riders and ranchers, the L. W. Lane family took to him immediately. He lived the lifestyle he promoted, and the publishers hired him to design not only their office building but their houses as well.

### The Regional Experience

The popular media in general and *Sunset* in particular looked upon the custom-designed ranch house as a suburban ideal, a sort of short-hand for California living at its best. With its outdoor rooms and built-in barbecues, the ranch house evoked regional associations as quickly and distinctly as palm trees or redwoods or clumps of California poppies. And though most people could not afford the horses and the stables and the miles of running fence that seemed to accompany this ideal, many could afford a patio or a barbecue pit. They could afford "outdoor living," the most important, most marketable, part of the lifestyle.

In other words, you didn't have to own a ranch house to get a little ranch house "rambling" into your life. Even if you lived in a Cape Cod-styled house, you could still participate more fully in the regional experience – the distinct experience of living in California and the West – by adding a deck or an outdoor fireplace off the kitchen. *Sunset*, for one, would show you how.

The ranch house became important not just because of its physical characteristics and because it filled a need, but because it vividly expressed a particular, romanticized version of the California dream. It was, especially during the 1950s, newsworthy and emblematic at the same time. The ranch house seemed both indigenous and contemporary: a distinctive frame for a novel way of living. It helped market and indeed, package, a vision of California as the suburban Eden. The ranch house was California-in-a-container. You just had to add water.

# Regionalism: Climate, Site, and Materials

*Ray Kappe, FAIA*

A discussion involving the notion of regionalism and California architecture should center on the appropriateness of its response to environmental factors rather than imported historicist styles. Weather, life-style, and natural settings have for long defined southern California as a region within the state. Los Angeles itself has several micro-climates due to the sea, the mountains, the canyons and the desert-like flatlands. Los Angeles architecture, in particular residential architecture, has responded to this

environmental richness with a corresponding variety of regional characteristics.

It is possible to trace the development of housing in Los Angeles from the simple adobe, flat-roofed dwellings of the early settlers to the explorations of Greene & Greene, Gill, Schindler,



**Santa Barbara Houses. Photos by Wayne McCall.**

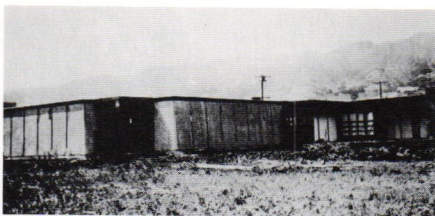


**Blacker House, Pasadena. Greene & Greene.  
Photo by Shelly Kappe.**

Neutra, Wright, and the generations of architects who followed. After World War II, a mutually-supportive group of young architects set out to develop a new architectural language for southern California. The work of Greene & Greene and the influence of Neutra, as reinterpreted by Harwell Harris, established a basis for a common ground of thinking. The bungalow, which existed in large quantities throughout the basin, was merged with the extensions and penetrations of Neutra to become pavilions connected to the site with sensitivity and care. Since most were working with sites on natural hillsides and in canyons full of trees, post and beam construction, roof

<sup>1</sup> Harwell Hamilton Harris: *A Collection of his Writings and Buildings*. Raleigh, N.C.: School of Design, North Carolina State: 1965. (Editor's note: H. H. Harris passed away on November 18, 1990 in Raleigh, N.C.)





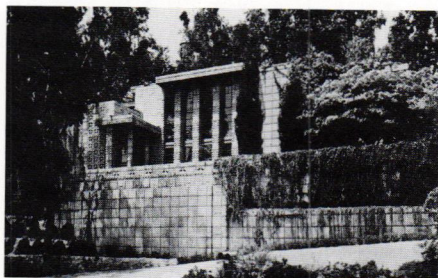
**Schindler House, W. Hollywood. Rudolph Schindler. Courtesy of the Architectural Drawing Collection, University Art Museum, UCSB.**



**Lovell House, Hollywood. Richard Neutra. Photo by Julius Shulman.**



**Dodge House, W. Hollywood. Irving Gill. Photo by Marvin Rand.**



**Storer House, W. Hollywood. Frank Lloyd Wright. Courtesy of Sci-Arc Archives.**



**Wyle House, Ojai. Harwell Hamilton Harris. Courtesy of Sci-Arc Archives.**

extensions, and trellises became the characteristic regional link in their work.

Harris' own discussion on regionalism places "free minds, the imagination, and the stake in the future" ahead of "climate, topography, and the particular kind of sticks and stones it has to build with."<sup>1</sup> But free minds must be in some agreement and large enough in numbers for there to be a regional impact. This was the case at the time in southern California, and the "stake in the future" that architects related to was a perceived belief that a better life-style in our climate could be created for returning veterans and their families. This perception of a need for change shared by many who acted upon it, established the regional nature of the work.

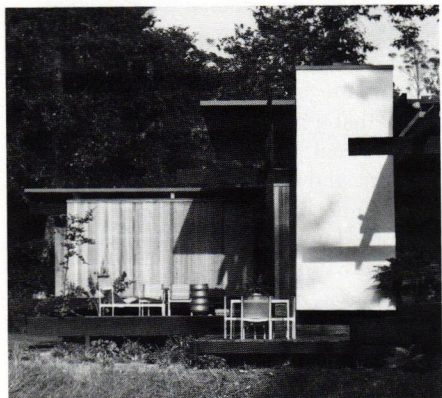
At USC this attitude was reinforced during the Gallion years, led by Cal Straub and a large group of practicing design critics such as A. Quincy Jones, Carl Maston, Ed Killingsworth, Conrad Buff, Don Hensman, Craig Elwood and Pierre Koenig. Many have called these the Case Study years, but it was much more pervasive than the small number of projects with which we are familiar. Neutra's work during this period was very influential and consistent with the prevailing mentality. The steel houses were the case studies that travelled throughout the world, but the predominant wood houses stayed at home and became the mainstay of southern California regional architecture.

Many of these houses used plaster, but most plaster construction was in the

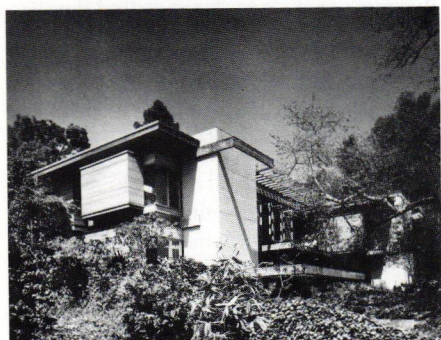




**"Mandalay", Brentwood. Cliff May. Photo by Julius Shulman.**



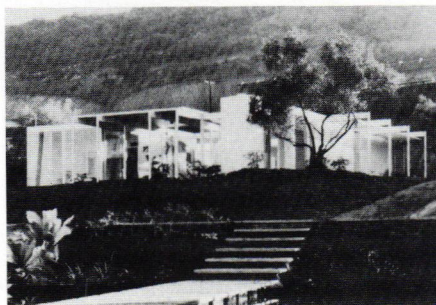
**Pregerson Residence, Santa Monica Canyon. Ray Kappe. Photo by Julius Shulman.**



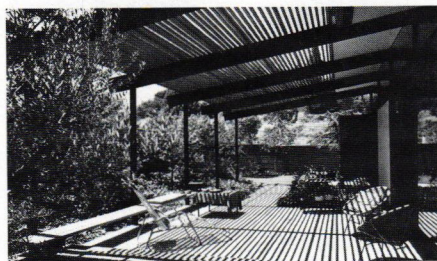
**Kappe Residence, Pacific Palisades. Ray Kappe. Photo by Julius Shulman.**



**Frank House, Pasadena. Calvin Straub of (Buff) Straub and (Don) Hensman. Photo by Julius Shulman.**



**Triad House, La Jolla. Edward Killingsworth. Photo by Julius Shulman.**



**Hayes House, Sherman Oaks. Ray Kappe. Photo by Julius Shulman.**



**Freedman Residence, Santa Monica. Kappe, Lotery, Boccato.**

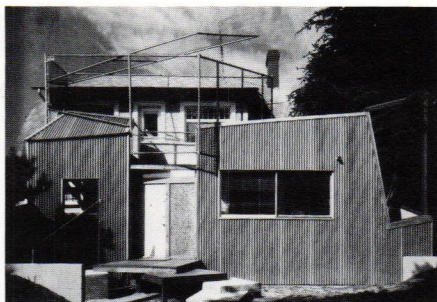


flatlands of urban Los Angeles, where it seemed most appropriate, economical, and in character with the warmer climate and constricted sites. For many, these sites did not become available until the 80s except for apartment buildings. This reality of location and site strongly influenced the consistency of thought that prevailed for 15 years in southern California.

These circumstances have changed over the past decade. The preponderance of international communications, post-modernism, energy standards, and the migration to southern California from the east coast and the Pacific Rim has altered the cohesiveness that once existed, and what could once be referred to as southern California regionalism. In the 80s most young architects were practicing in the back alleys of Venice on additions to small bungalows of another era. This context and the corresponding work expresses a regionalism based upon a Los Angeles "attitude" rather than climate and materials. Once again this point of view is shared by a large enough number of architects and supported by publications to the exclusion of other directions, making it a form of regionalism. In this manner, *Arts and Architecture*



Venice 3. Morphosis. Photo by Thom Mayne.



Gehry House, Santa Monica. Frank Gehry. Photo by T. Kitajima.

magazine was instrumental in the post World War II era, and it is questionable whether the regionalism of that generation would have existed without the magazine's support.

At any rate, the consensus that once existed would be difficult to obtain today. Regionalism is difficult to defend in a world that is truly international, where materials are easily available, climate is controlled, ideas are prolific, and the instant hero is to be emulated. Today more than ever, architects are working across the continent and internationally. But in Los Angeles the import has never seemed appropriate, whether it is a copy of European historicism, an east coast fishing village, or the work of an out-of-state super star who is usually laying his or her worst piece of work on L.A. Earlier foreign transplants who became residents of southern California were particularly sensitive to our special climate, and developed appropriate architecture for the region. This sensitivity influenced a whole generation of architects who were conscientiously seeking to participate in the continuum of quality architecture rather than self-promotion.

Our world could be a better place if architects would once again become sensitive to site, climate and appropriate materials and to understanding a locale and the wonders of nature rather than joining today's desire to jar the senses. The search for the elements of regionalism should not be a thing of the past.



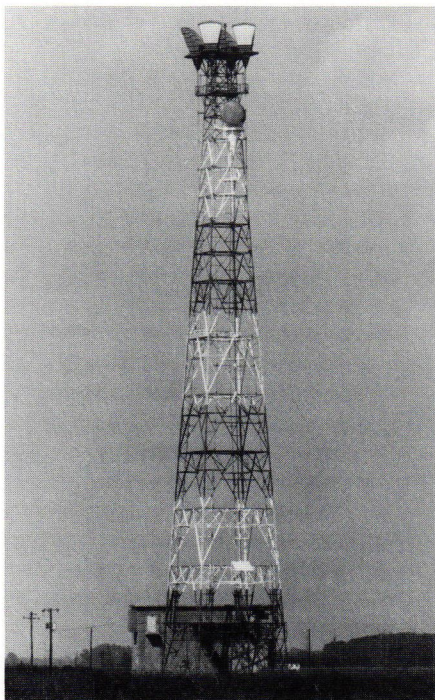
# Regionalism in a Global Community

L. Coleman Coker, AIA

*Travelling south on Highway 61 from Memphis it is a sweltering afternoon in late August. Descending from the bluffs that overlook the river one enters the flat expanse of rich farm land that forms the Mississippi Delta. A muggy haze hovers just above the uninterrupted rows of soybeans and cotton. Rickety tenement shacks stand forsaken, their former occupants now barely subsisting in look-a-like, factory-built mobile homes. Cypress, poplar and oaks embroider the coagulated waters of a meandering bayou as it snakes its way through otherwise undisturbed fields.*

*Those anonymous dwellings are umbilically attached to dish-shaped receivers aimed at some satellite stuck in geostationary orbit 23,000 miles away. Broadcasts received link the inhabitants to the outside world – a world mostly dissociated from their everyday concerns. A giant microwave tower stands guardian over cotton fields. Its presence guarantees connectedness to most places on the globe.*

*Poverty is still the prevalent condition in this land. Mechanized farming techniques, introduced forty or so years ago, deprived the tenant farmer of a means of support. They were forced to choose: either escape to the industrial cities of the North as low-skilled factory laborers or remain in this impoverished region to take their chances. Today, cotton gins and grain silos are still preponderant but are slowly being replaced by catfish farms and packing plants. Recently introduced, the catfish crop transformed traditional farming in some respects, but seining catfish from a man-made pond is not far removed from picking cotton.*



**Microwave tower in Lula, Mississippi:** A worldwide network of electronic communication has replaced the significance of de-centered local communities with that of a global, centered view.

*In the Delta, the distinctiveness of the land profoundly defined its people and their culture. Its buildings, from the meekest outhouse to the most opulent antebellum plantation mansion, provided a point of reference, a connectedness with its collective past. It is a land saturated with contradiction, fable, and mythical invention. The Delta has provided a crucible for human endurance, a stage for social intolerance, and more recently, a denunciation of that same discrimination.*

The Delta is just one area of the South, with its own unique sub-culture,





House trailer modified with home-made shed roof, Yalobusha County, Mississippi. Appropriation and modification of elements from outside a locale has historically been a method all cultures employ in the evolution of the production of artifacts.

yet it represents the whole of the region in terms of historical development and modification. The South's obsession with history has provided a paradox of pride and guilt that is still prevalent, and a record that has made alternative approaches to cultural attitudes difficult. Not long ago, this context seemed unyielding.

The South, like all other regions, is now inexorably intertwined with the ever-expanding global culture. The delta planter now receives daily readouts over his fax machine concerning cotton and soybean commodities as they are affected by closing prices on the Tokyo stock exchange. Prior to this centered culture, collective memory, whether preserved in family stories, architecture, literature or folk art, made a region unique. Architecture, originating from authentic regional qualities, provided connectedness with a region's collective past. It produced a built environment that acted as a conduit of collective memory for future generations.

The prodigious overflow of information on a global scale has expunged the perception of self-identity and cognition of belonging by eliminating the need for local collective memory. Omnipresent film, video, and T.V. images have re-

placed the need that artifact and collective memory once filled. Culturally significant artifacts, including our built environment, have become less consequential as conveyors of the cultural continuum. As the global community intensifies its technological dependence, the means of instantaneous communication on a worldwide scale becomes commonplace. The implied necessity to present the lowest common denominator produces homogenization.

The term *authentic regionality* is here defined as local culture mindful of itself. Through that mindfulness, a capability of absorbing local tradition and context is achieved. This ability results in a unique recognition and a cherished appreciation for that place. Authentic artifacts diminish as locales embrace the centered, global culture. Atlanta becomes indistinguishable from Dallas, Houston indistinguishable from Los Angeles and so on. This leveling has nourished a loss of identity. *Regionalism* is frequently confused with sympathetic provincialism resulting in sentimentality and nostalgia. This attitude relates to style and does not apply to regionalism as discussed here. Valid artifacts produced in a region are authentic, original and not fashioned by style.

From a historical perspective, the origins and development of southern California stand in sharp contrast against the authentic regionality that once occurred in the South. Southern California has been isolated as the subject for this argument because of its acute disposition toward placelessness. The reality of artifacts produced in the South, assumed by most as unequivocally regional, is compared to the southern California environment that would be considered non-regional.

In this context two issues stand out: First, the contrast of a centered society, as exists in southern California, with a de-centered community as exists (or existed) in the South; second, the homogenization that occurs to a culture when the specific qualities of a region are replaced by this centered culture.

*Regionalism*, from this viewpoint, may describe a community or culture in discord with the centered characteristics brought on by the global community. At one time, there were many Souths comprised of small communities, each with its own tradition. This aggregation made for a pluralistic, non-centered region. While disconnected in certain traditions, each locale had in common several issues of prime importance: relative physical isolation, prejudice of race, and a poverty-stricken economic base. Due to the overwhelming quality of these circumstances, other developments simply had little chance to be nurtured.

Because of these factors there has never existed a vital regional hierarchical center to which the South could turn. Without this center, progress based on exchange of ideas has moved at an extremely slow pace. However negative that isolation may seem, that environment lacking a center has provided a tradition resulting in authentic regionalism. From this view, *regionalism* may then be defined as a locale incapable of confirming its own artifacts in a manner that allows national discussion. The region's

lack of infrastructure to promote its artifacts prevents it from seizing its own aesthetic and dispensing it to the national community. With its culture based on historical context and with no mechanism in place to provide meaning and criticism, the South has mostly remained regional or de-centered.

In contrast, the west coast was never provided the opportunity to absorb its collective memory and transfer it into authentic artifact. Due to the extraordinary population expansion in southern California during a relatively brief period, the region never had sufficient time to appropriate, absorb, modify and create a context unique to its locale. Automobiles, freeways and air-conditioned malls made possible a built environment without a connection to locale.

Southern California appears to always live in the present. Artifacts originated in this ever-present have produced vitality, but are void of content beyond built-in obsolescence. Signifiers such as Hollywood and Disneyland result only in pseudo-content. The collective memory of southern California requires no historical connection. This reality provides the basis for a global aesthetic.

Southern California is often at the center of the arts world. Style and fashion, in the popular sense for the world community, originate in California. The electronic media (television, film, video, music) rely upon southern California for direction, allowing for the area's confirmation of its own aesthetic and its transfer to the world community. This mechanism establishes the region as one of several cores for a centered world culture with an inherent feature that has stripped away any sense of self-identity.

Thirty years ago Paul Ricoeur, in *History and Truth*, observed that "The phenomenon of universalization, while being an advancement of mankind, at the same time constitutes a sort of subtle destruction, not only of traditional cultures, which might not be an irreparable wrong,



but also of what I shall call for the time being the creative nucleus of great cultures, that nucleus on the basis of which we interpret life, what I shall call in advance the ethical and mythical nucleus of mankind.... Everywhere throughout the world, one finds the same bad movie, the same slot machines, the same plastic or aluminum atrocities, the same twisting of language by propaganda, etc.”

The *ever-present* built environment increasingly depends on the proliferation of non-identity that must reject any attachment to locale. In today’s centered culture, regions are more likely to survive economically if they repress their local idiosyncrasies in favor of this global context. A world community that has cast aside its regional qualities for the ever-present has begun to make everything from Michigan to Mississippi appear like southern California and, southern California like anywhere else. The same nondescript buildings that exist from coast-to-coast disallow architecture’s role as a repository for collective memory. The result – Anywhere, USA.

With this predominant tendency toward a continued loss of identity, how can a centered global community maintain diversification? How does any locale maintain its uniqueness while benefitting from technological advantages necessary for viability in a global culture? Is diversification and self-identity even valid in today’s post-historical culture?

In *Science and the Modern World*, Alfred North Whitehead stated the following: “A diversification among human communities is essential for the provision of the incentive and material for the Odyssey of the human spirit. . . Men require of their neighbors something sufficiently akin to be understood, something sufficiently different to provoke attention, and something great enough to command admiration.”

While maintaining diversification and without loss of identity, regional

qualities can be interpreted, understood and transferred to a centered global community. Characteristics that embrace the culture of locale can embody themes of universal validity. An example of this is found in the writing of William Faulkner and his fictional characters who play out their roles in Mississippi’s mythic Yoknapatawpha county. The authenticity in Faulkner’s writing results from a context of locale. Yet, Faulkner’s work is appreciated beyond the immediate area of rural Mississippi; his writing transmits qualities inherent in human nature that are universally understood, whether one is in Paris, Tokyo, or Memphis.

A locale can maintain its uniqueness while benefitting from the technological advantages necessary for viability in a global culture by cultivating awareness. First, an awareness of the impact caused by a culture based on post-industrial, a-historical, centered principles is imperative. Whether it is southern California, the Mississippi delta, or rural Vermont, a region’s artifacts of meaningful value are composed of time and place, grounded by its collective memory. The homogeneous qualities inherent in a centered global community destroy that time and place. A knowledge that this loss has stymied diversification and depleted distinct qualities, provides a foundation to oppose the qualities of a centered culture. Second, an awareness of those unique qualities that go to make a particular locale like no other should be nurtured. A knowledge of the life in the place where one lives, and the complex societal mechanisms that make up that place is necessary for authentic self-understanding. Coupled with a faithfulness to that place, this will cultivate a wisdom of attentiveness and stewardship. Sustaining identity in a culture that relies upon non-identity is achievable only when these ethics are maintained and cherished. Increasingly, this has become a necessity for civilization and survival.

# Being Here: Ethnicity and Regionalism in California

*Christopher L. Yip*

California is a patchwork landscape of ethnic and social enclaves. To study the regional or local qualities of a place it is necessary to look carefully at the people who actually brought a place into being, who have inhabited and shaped it since its inception. Many intentions and lived meanings are to be found in a group's attempts to personalize its environment in the subtle ways that affect building design and landscape settings.

In the case of the Chinese, the physical manifestations of their settlement did not normally involve radically different building types, structural systems or materials. The actual changes that made many Chinatowns special were in the alterations and decorations to standard western building types. Immigrants adapted their patterns of life to fit into the common forms of dwelling and

work in California.<sup>1</sup> Locke, a Chinese farming community, looks like a classic western town with its one- and two-storied wooden structures and numerous balconies over the sidewalks. It is at the level of signage and internal adaptations for particular uses that one finds a specialization of the setting.

Locke was platted with a row of rectangular lots lined up between a levee road and the town's main street. The buildings on these modest 21' by 75' lots were generally two-story structures with saddlebag roofs, and two false fronts facing Main street and the levee road. Commercial space occupied the second floor fronts facing the levee and the ground floor front facing Main Street. No space was wasted. A shop with dance floor and rental rooms on the top floor of one building faced the levee road, while



Store fronts along the levee road, Locke.

<sup>1</sup> Yip (1978), pp. 106 – 111.

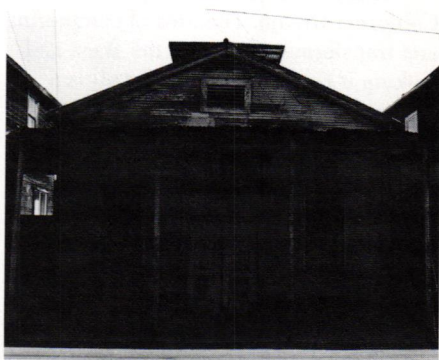


the ground floor below contained another shop, a restaurant, and more rental rooms.<sup>2</sup>

Most Californians are immigrants (or children of immigrants) with shallow roots in the landscape and lingering ties to other places. Quite often, they had not expected to remain in California for long. Until the 1920s, the Chinese in California were commonly men who expected to return to their families in China after making good.

An examination of Locke reveals a community designed to serve predominantly male farm workers who used the town as an entrepôt and social center. Stores, gambling houses and brothels welcomed the Chinese American field hands on their days off. Letters and remittances could be sent back to China, news about jobs were sought from store owners who often doubled as labor contractors. The generic buildings had to

The myth of California coincided with the desires of the immigrants. The West was a mythic place in which immigrants would supposedly find new opportunities and an escape from the confines of their pasts; it was a land of dreams in which easily extracted wealth abounded and, since it was empty, no hindrances existed to its rapid exploitation. The immigrants



Gambling hall, Locke.



Multiple-use building, Locke.

serve an assortment of activities, often with an amazing juxtaposition of uses in one building: stores, brothels, boarding houses, restaurants, dance halls, gambling parlors, storage spaces, apartments.<sup>3</sup>

from both the East and the West were in search of just such a place, where poverty could be escaped quickly and easily, and where the shackles of existing social relationships no longer constrained individual initiative.

Reality was somewhat different from the myth. Many found it neither empty nor easily giving of its bounty. Easy successes and triumphant returns to the homeland were few. What each successive wave of immigrants found was a land already occupied by others of diverse backgrounds where all the problems that the immigrant wished to escape finally came to roost.<sup>4</sup> The boom and bust cycles of the Far West shattered many dreams, and, as immigrants became rooted in California, it was often easier to accept defeat if there were scapegoats to take the blame. The Chinese male immigrants sought wealth to take back to an increasingly impoverished and troubled south China. Instead they became captives of

<sup>2</sup>Yip (1978), pp. 3 – 13.    <sup>3</sup>Chan (1986), pp. 158 – 224.    <sup>4</sup>Limerick (1987), pp. 134 – 175.

a life of hard labor, low wages, and discrimination, and the scapegoats in periods of recession. The Exclusion Acts, which hampered new Chinese immigration from 1882 until 1952, kept the Chinese American community a bachelor society well after other ethnic groups had sought out their picture brides and established families.<sup>5</sup>

Ethnic strife has its roots in the California Dream. The idea of conquering and transforming a part of the West and making it perfect once and for all is a dream that parallels the desires of many architects. A California regionalism is about coming to terms with the immigrant fantasies and myths as they confront the problems and contradictions of the actual California that refuses to be easily subdued and recast to meet the newcomers' desires. The myths of a paradise full of opportunities, free of the societal fetters, free of the past, and ready to have its bounty effortlessly picked up from the ground, are the sorts of illusions that beat their heads against reality. Along with these dreams came the notion of a malleable environment capable of taking on any form the immigrant wished. These elements constitute a large portion of the idea of a "land of opportunity." The Indians would not just go away or become perfect Christians. The Mexicans would not just disappear after the conquest of the Far West by the United States. The Chinese, other Asians, and African Americans presented an unwanted multi-ethnic/multi-culturalism that seemed to provide an explanation for the failure of the dream.

In actuality, being in California makes one into a Californian. One's values and culture become a part of the mix, and one's efforts to confront California lead to a transformation in which the past and present are naturally joined one to the other. The immigrant brings a new configuration of attitudes and desires that he

or she then tries to realize in the new setting. The resulting hybrid is never just a replica of the distant native place, not is it ever totally new. The new hybrid is a transformation of the immigrant group's historical experiences of place modified to the new geographical, and social-historical conditions. Even a radical attempt to insert the images, ideals, forms and materials of another place into California would be different from the original through its juxtaposition with an alien setting. It is this hybridization that helps to differentiate regions from one another.

The farm laborers served by Locke longed for the traditional home life of their extended families in China. But that was not possible. The surrogates, for wives were brothels, for villages were associations, for the unrealized dream of quick a and easy wealth were the gambling houses.

In thinking about the settlement of Locke and the Chinese American landscape in terms of regionalism, the



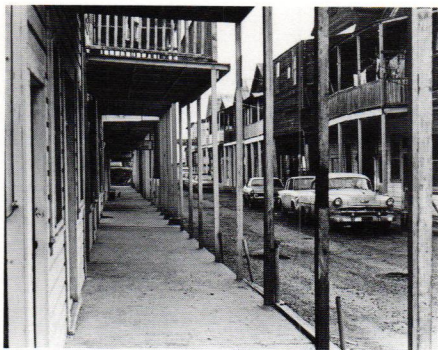
Former bar (left) and brothel (right), Locke.

Chinese interpreted their beliefs and values to fit the patterns of daily life needed to accommodate the new context. The seemingly subtle physical differences represented significantly different patterns of life and belief when viewed through the lens of agricultural labor dependent upon California agribusiness.

The impacts of ethnicity and group identity are hard to see when overlayed by major national forces such as the

<sup>5</sup>Tsai (1986), pp. 56 – 81.





**Main Street, Locke.**

industrialization of the building industry that reshaped the processes and forms of building across the Far West. Industrialized building and the dominant themes of Far Western history have tended to generate an architectural uniformity. Milled lumber, bricks, wood decoration and factory-made nails, were an important part of construction in California by the 1850s. Along with these materials came standard ways of using them as the forms, decorative elements, and styles arrived from the East. In the case of Locke, local carpenter builders were hired by Chinese American clients to build simple one and two story, rectangular, wood-framed buildings. These buildings were made from the standard industrially-produced materials, assembled in standard forms. One must look at more subtle patterns interwoven in the dominating archetypes of Western building for the ethnic particularities.

The differences are to be found in the social arrangements, small changes and patterns of use. It is at this more subtle level that an ethnic influence on regionalism will appear, rather than in dramatic differences in building forms or exterior appearance. Regionalism is about the realities of a place and not just fantasy and image. To be sensitive to context means more than examining the materials of the locality, the scale, proportions, forms and elements common to the place. One must also investigate the meanings they contain.

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# A Region for Women: Architects in Early California

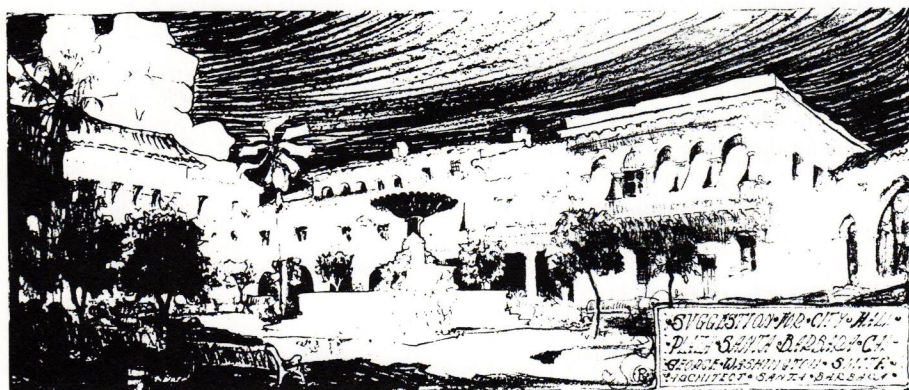
*Diane Favro*

In 1937 the *Los Angeles Times* featured civic and business leaders in an article "Going Forward with Southern California." Among the pantheon of male faces was one woman, Edith Northman, identified as "the only woman architect in Los Angeles."<sup>1</sup> In truth, she was not alone. Dozens of women shaped the built environment of California in the decades before 1950. The unique characteristics of the region provided diverse opportunities for women in the professions, and especially in architecture. They had successful careers as architects, interior designers, landscape architects and contractors. Many were extremely prolific; many created designs of excellence.

Tottering at the edge of the nation, the West Coast has always been less fettered by preconceptions about gender

roles than other regions. Women in the freewheeling atmosphere of California at the turn of the century found their services readily accepted in a variety of fields. In the 1890s the Morgan sisters of Oakland did not think it unreasonable to pursue professions: Julia became an architect, her sister Emma a lawyer.<sup>2</sup> With no architecture schools in California during the 19th Century, the ambitious Morgan travelled to Paris. She was the first woman of any nationality to be accepted into the architecture program at the prestigious École des Beaux Arts, receiving her diploma in 1902.

Prompted by the booms of the late 19th century, several state colleges appeared in California in advance of actual settlement. From the first they enlarged enrollments by accepting women.



Working for the firm of George Washington Smith, Lulah Maria Riggs executed this design for a proposed city hall in Santa Barbara in 1923 (courtesy Architectural Drawing Collection/University Art Museum of the University of California at Santa Barbara).

<sup>1</sup> *Los Angeles Times* (May, 1937).

<sup>2</sup> Contemporary with the Morgan girls in Oakland were Isadora Duncan and Gertrude Stein; Richey, E. (1975), pp. 237-263.



Teaching and liberal arts colleges gave women a general education and the desire for more. In 1903 when John Galen Howard and Bernard Maybeck opened the state's first architecture school at U.C. Berkeley, the entering class was divided almost equally between men and women.<sup>3</sup> Among the early graduates of "The Ark" were Lilian Rice of San Diego (1910), Dorothy Wormser of San Francisco (1916), Lulah Maria Riggs of Santa Barbara (1919), and Irene McFaul of Los Angeles (1921). The private University of Southern California initiated an architecture program in 1914. The inaugural class included Martha Roney Stubbs.<sup>4</sup>

With only two architecture schools serving the entire state for many years, aspiring architects turned to alternative means of education. Longing for the imprimatur of European training, architects of both sexes enrolled in correspondence courses. In particular, women took advantage of this opportunity, since it allowed them to study at home and care for their families. Furthermore, such courses were non-discriminatory, with submissions by mail often made using gender-free initials rather than full names. Widowed with three small children in 1903, Hazel Waterman of San Diego took an International Correspondence School Course in architecture. After 1916, Californians of both sexes enrolled by mail in the Beaux Arts Institute of Design centered in New York. For example, Rose Connor took the BAID course and attended the local Beaux Arts atelier in Pasadena from 1925-30.

Many women entered the profession through apprenticeship. In particular, the loose career structure in California gave an easy entrée to architecture. In 1919 at age 13, Edla Muir began to work summers

for her high school teacher John Byers. Within the next few years Byers experimented with tile manufacture, adobe construction, and contracting, eventually earning an architecture license in 1926. Muir remained his apprentice, receiving an architecture license in 1934.<sup>5</sup>

Other women became involved with architecture on a very personal level. The state had a large number of independent women who lived alone and supported themselves. Not infrequently, they designed their own work and living spaces. The Bay Area in particular cultivated many powerful personalities. Painter and suffragist Leola Hall designed her own houses and several speculative residences in the Berkeley Hills during the early decades of the 20th century.

More than any other state, California offered opportunities precisely in those areas most open to contributions by women: residential and landscape design.<sup>6</sup> In the early 20th century people came to the state by the thousands in search of unending sunshine, lush vegetation, good health, and a new start. All needed housing. Between 1921-1926 Los Angeles averaged over 40,000 new homes built each year. In a promotional article of 1926, Marc N. Goodnow identified southern California as a leader in residential design: "It is this commanding authority in a growing field that has awakened the entire architectural profession and the home-building public and turned their eyes toward California."<sup>7</sup>

Contemporary clients and practitioners acknowledged the home as the woman's realm, and thus accepted women as residential designers. In an interview for the *Architectural Record*, architect Edla Muir said, "Once some background has been acquired it is a foregone

<sup>3</sup> Rochlin (1977), 38.

<sup>4</sup> USC initiated a curriculum in architecture in 1914. Five years later the university created a Department of Architecture in the School of Fine Arts and Architecture; this subsequently became the School of Architecture in 1979. <sup>5</sup> Grimes (1989). <sup>6</sup> Wright (1977). <sup>7</sup> Goodnow (1926).

conclusion that the public is most willing to accept a woman in domestic architecture."<sup>8</sup> Virtually every female practitioner in the state designed houses, usually working closely with the woman of the house. Client satisfaction was high. After over half a century many of the original owners still occupy these homes. Women architects boasted a high number of repeat clients and referrals. Admiring neighbors often scrambled to hire the same architect; as a result, houses by women designers are frequently clustered.

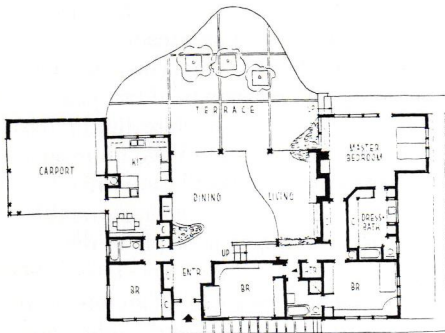
Attached to the home, the garden also fell within the domain of women.<sup>9</sup> Before courses on landscape architecture were available in California, women studied horticulture. In 1881 Kate Sessions received a degree in horticulture from UC Berkeley; afterward she was instrumental in the creation of Balboa Park and the landscaping of San Diego.<sup>10</sup> In later years women pursued careers in landscape design. California native Florence Yoch opened a landscape firm with Lucile Council; together they designed gardens for great estates from Santa Barbara to Mexico.<sup>11</sup> Yoch's first commission was in 1917; her last in 1971.

Directed toward domestic and landscape design, women architects in

California were well situated to address a particular regional concern: the integration of indoors and outdoors. Edla Muir in a 1949 house for Zola Hall brought the stone work and plants of the patio directly into the living room; in the Isley house she brought the swimming pool inside. Admiring how Lulah Maria Riggs incorporated the natural surroundings in her projects, A. Quincy Jones Jr. exclaimed, "Riggs taught us years ago how to design a house for southern California."<sup>12</sup>

The earthy, sculptural qualities of adobe construction and the myths about indigenous building techniques led people to associate this local building technique with women.<sup>13</sup> During the 1880s, Alice Constance Austin built an adobe residence in Santa Barbara, and followed this up with articles in *Overland Monthly* on adobe design and construction techniques.<sup>14</sup> Needing an architect to oversee the extensive restoration of the Casa de Estudillo adobe in San Diego, W. Clayton chose Hazel Waterman over her male colleagues.<sup>15</sup>

In addition to homes, patrons not surprisingly called on women architects to design other building types also traditionally linked with nurturing and female pursuits. The oeuvre of almost every female architect in California included children's and health facilities, as well as women's clubs. When members of the influential women's organization, the L.A. Friday Morning Club, decided in 1907 to build a new facility, they made a special effort to contact a woman architect. Hearing of one practicing in San Francisco, but not knowing her name, club members referred to the architect as Miss \_\_\_\_\_ before identifying her as Julia Morgan.<sup>16</sup> Though this particular project was never realized, Morgan did



**With the Zola Hall House (1949) in Los Angeles Edla Muir brought the patio indoors, passing under a single wall of glass.**

<sup>8</sup> *Architectural Record* (1948). <sup>9</sup> Nevins (1985). <sup>10</sup> MacPhail (1976). <sup>11</sup> Yoch (1989).

<sup>12</sup> Rochlin (1977), 42. <sup>13</sup> A longstanding local tradition holds that the clay roof tiles of early adobe structures were formed over the thighs of shapely Indian maidens. <sup>14</sup> Austin (1908). <sup>15</sup> Thornton (1987).

<sup>16</sup> *Friday Morning Club Scrapbook* (1907), p. 162.



design several buildings for women's groups including the Wednesday Club in San Luis Obispo, the Margaret Baylor Inn in Santa Barbara, and numerous YWCAs throughout the state.

Community design also fell within the realm of female architects. California offered special opportunities for new communities. The state's famed liberality readily accommodated experiments in alternative living. Over a dozen utopias appeared at the turn of the century, several headed by women.<sup>17</sup> In 1915 Alice Constance Austin designed a remarkable, unrealized plan for the socialist community at Llano del Rio east of Los Angeles. Her mile-square scheme

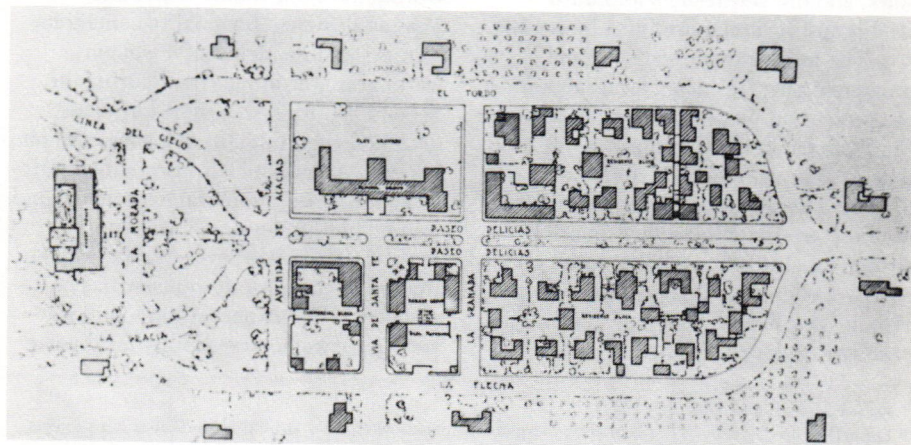


In 1915 Alice Constance Austin designed row housing for the desert commune of Llano del rio. Each u-shaped unit was connected to a centralized kitchen and laundry by an underground railroad (as published in *The Next Step*).

included row-housing with private courtyards, centralized services connected to all houses by underground rail, and open space for experiments by future architects.<sup>18</sup> The great need for residences provided women commissions to execute workers' housing and community designs. When the firm of Requa and Jackson determined in 1922 that the 8600-acre project for a new community at Rancho Santa Fe was unprofitable and too distant from their San Diego office they turned the design over to their site architect, Lilian Rice. Other female practitioners designed workers' housing and barracks.

Certain prominent businesses in California were especially supportive of women architects. Most notably, women held important positions in the movie industry as actresses, as well as set and costume designers. As a result, moguls and stars alike had few reservations about hiring women for private commissions. Thriving on an atmosphere of constant change, these patrons redid their homes yearly, if not monthly. Movie people pleased with private commissions by women in turn hired them on films.

After landscaping the home of



In 1922 Lilian Rice assumed responsibility for the design of the community and buildings of Rancho Santa Fe near San Diego (courtesy of Rancho Santa Fe Association).

<sup>17</sup> Hine (1963). <sup>18</sup> Austin (1935).





The Spanish style Hollywood Studio Club by Julia Morgan (1923) housed young women working in the film industry (courtesy Special Collections, California Polytechnic State University).

David O. Selznick, Florence Yoch worked on several of his films including *Romeo and Juliet* (1936), *The Good Earth* (1937), and *Gone with the Wind* (1939). Edla Muir designed homes for Robert Taylor and Barbara Stanwyck (1947), and Shirley Temple's family, among other stars, and did set-designs for *Laura* (1944) and several more films in the 40s.

The movies themselves did not promote a positive image for women in the profession. In 1937 Samuel Goldwyn Productions issued the film *Woman Chases Man* with Miriam Hopkins playing a woman recently graduated from architecture school. In one scene she strides into the office of a potential client and gives her credentials: educated at Pitt and the Beaux Arts. Arguing her case she exclaims, "For seven years

I have studied like a man, researched like a man. There is nothing feminine about my mind...," and then promptly faints.<sup>19</sup> This negative image of the woman architect appeared even though MGM hired successful practitioner Edith Northman as an expert consultant on the film.

The fantasy atmosphere of the movie and tourist industries encompassed the entire state. Distanced from the elitist criteria of high-style design, fanciful architecture held few restrictions for women designers. Nina Zwebell with her husband Arthur, neither trained in architecture, designed many exotic residential environments in Los Angeles, including fairytale cottages and moorish apartments. Julia Morgan created elaborate, evocative environments for William Randolph Hearst at San Simeon and Wyntoon. The colorful appearances of such projects detract from the evaluation of structural and programmatic concerns. Morgan's Hearst Castle is renowned for its eclectic treatment of styles, yet should be as notable for its intricate reinforced concrete truss and form work.<sup>20</sup>

A staging and manufacturing area for both world wars, California offered unique jobs and training for women. During the First World War, Julia Morgan designed hospitality centers for soldiers and residences for women working in war industries. During the Second World War, Edith Northman designed everything from barracks to pit latrines. Aeronautics firms gladly hired women with architectural experience and trained non-professional women in drafting.<sup>21</sup> By 1944, over 62,000 women worked in the aircraft industry in Los Angeles.<sup>22</sup> The expertise gained in war-work gave women credibility for diverse

<sup>19</sup> Parker, Campbell & Bigelow (1937).

<sup>20</sup> Trained as an engineer at UC Berkeley, Morgan became known for her structural work after her projects withstood the San Francisco earthquake of 1906. Boutelle (1988).

<sup>21</sup> After being trained at Douglas Aircraft, Esther McCoy attempted to enroll in the architecture program at USC. When male professors in the school discouraged this "older" woman (age approximately 40) from applying, she took one of her sketches to the Viennese architect Rudolph Schindler who hired her on the spot; personal conversation, November 28, 1989. <sup>22</sup> Jensen & Lothrop (1987).



technical projects. In the 30s Union Oil commissioned Edith Northman to develop prototypes of service stations; she eventually designed over 50 stations throughout California.

Faced with diverse opportunities, women in California were able to have extremely prolific careers. Julia Morgan's output was phenomenal; from her office in the Bay Area she completed over 700 projects. The works by both Edith Northman and Edla Muir of Los Angeles number well over 200. At her peak in the thirties, Northman produced over ten large projects a year, a notable output even today.<sup>23</sup>

In general, architects find name recognition elusive. Over 90% of those who create the built environment remain anonymous. Maps for homes of the stars include numerous residences by women architects, but not their names. The project types, industries and mental outlook of the region provided particularly fertile opportunities for women in environmental design. The same positive conditions operate today. Currently 20% of the women in the AIA reside in California, three times the concentration in any other state.<sup>24</sup> In stone, brick and concrete throughout the state, and on celluloid viewed throughout the world, the women architects of California continue to create an enduring legacy.

I wish to extend my thanks to Tony P. Wren at the archives of the AIA in Washington D.C. and to the students of a seminar on women and minority architects given at UCLA in Fall, 1989.

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<sup>23</sup>Baumoe (unpublished). <sup>24</sup>A 1987 survey lists 3,531 women members of the AIA with 698 women practicing in California. Berkeley (1989).

# Maquiladora Modernism: *Una Herida Abierta*

Lian Hurst Mann, AIA

The U.S.-Mexico border *es una herida abierta* where the Third World grates against the first and bleeds. And before a scab forms it hemorrhages again, the lifeblood of two worlds merging to form a third country – a border culture.

Gloria Anzaldúa,  
*Borderlands/La Frontera*, 1987.

Regionalism in architectural theory has focused on the differentiation of local characteristics – environmental, social, economic, aesthetic – from the universal, the timeless, or the placeless as the primary determinants of architectural design. Alexander Tzonis and Liane Lefaivre have exposed an ambiguity within the project of regionalism: its dual association with “reform and liberation” and with “repression and chauvinism.”<sup>1</sup> In architectural practice, regional differentiation contains a struggle between political alignments that manifests itself as *una herida abierta* (an open wound).

As a strategy of resistance to a universalizing norm, differentiation has manifested itself in articulation of light quality or building materials (regional environment), nationalist, religious, or civic architecture (regional politics), or avant-garde gestures of negation and pop culture-making (regional schools of thought). Through these “reform and liberation” practices of differentiation, many architects have come to challenge

Modernism in architecture as the aesthetic face of economic profiteering, cultural domination, and the universalization of modern capitalism.

However, within the project of regionalism also resides a strategy of domination. Here “repression and chauvinism” occur through the process of inclusion and exclusion that ensures social distinction as well as through the absorption and suppression of subcultures within the dominant culture of society.

In order to enhance social distinction, some practices of regionalism have prospered by exaggerating internal regional integrity. Difference becomes the basis for sameness. For example, in *Architecture California* 12:1, design review was shown to operate at the regional level to institutionalize and protect the social integrity of a distinguished group: the “Mediterranean/Spanish Colonial Revival image” of Palos Verdes; the “environmental bastion” of Marin County; the “sense of trees and other vegetation that seem natural” in Montecito; the boundary “fences, gates, ditches, berms, hedges, and walls” of countless “secured communities.”<sup>2</sup>

By far the most insidious face of “repressive and chauvinistic” regionalism, peculiar to Modernism, is the design imperative that enables domination by consent: the appropriation of bits and pieces of local, even alien or subversive,

<sup>1</sup> Tzonis and Lefaivre (1981). *The Grid and the Pathway. Architecture in Greece*. 15. This article is discussed in Frampton (1983). <sup>2</sup> *Architecture California* (1990).





United Colors Benetton, Border Grill,  
la. Eyeworks, Melrose Avenue, Los Angeles.

cultures in order to aesthetically invigorate, by means of variety and delight, the universalizing economic and political forces of maturing capitalism. David Gebhard explored tourism-driven culture-borrowing in *Architecture California* 12:1.<sup>3</sup> Consumer delight over borrowed style in American commercial architecture is all too familiar: Soviet-style sportswear boutiques, Tiki bars, “border” grills.<sup>4</sup> Even local ecological sensitivity has become a marketing strategy for environmental polluters, leading to new architectural markets in toxin-busting intelligent buildings and regional waste-processing facilities. In these cases, regional differentiation serves to effect its opposite: difference is made same through consent to the variety of images that *re-present* democracy and freedom. It is this appropriating tendency and the resistance it produces that I seek to explore.

To focus this exploration, I choose to look at the California-Mexico border “region” that sharpens many of the issues pertaining to the Modernist notion of regionalism. Mexico is appreciated for its qualities of light and distinct local materials, colors, and forms. Many architects have looked beyond the border to borrow inspiration for a “California style.”<sup>5</sup> In contrast to this romanticized practice of cultural blending, the grating of one culture against another in the *maquiladora* zone is only the most recent rubbing of salt into an old wound.

Rodolfo Acuña has documented the actual relationship between peoples converging on the border region as one of social oppression and economic exploitation rather than mutual respect and cultural exchange.<sup>6</sup> And this relationship is fundamental to any understanding of “California architecture.”

The Native American Indian populations of the Pacific coast region were subjugated by the Spanish when the first mission occupied the territory they called *California* in 1769. Their cultures were systematically suppressed and their labor was appropriated for the building of the mission system. As part of Mexico, California won independence from Spain in 1822, only to be reconquered by the United States in the Mexican-American War of 1848. The bear emblazoned on the California flag is the symbol raised by the Anglo-American conquerors in the now famous Bear Flag Revolt at Sonoma. The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo divided the land, establishing the borderline between *Californios* and *Mejicanos*. The treaty promised land rights and citizenship to the California Mexicans, but unchecked treaty violations forced them into poverty as land speculators set about developing the new state. The Spanish Colonial style and remnants of Indian adobe were borrowed by early California developers, just as Mexican workers were “borrowed” to build the railroads, mines and agriculture of the “new West” north of the border. While the aesthetic styles flourished – and advanced California’s regional distinction – workers endured substandard wages and inhumane housing.

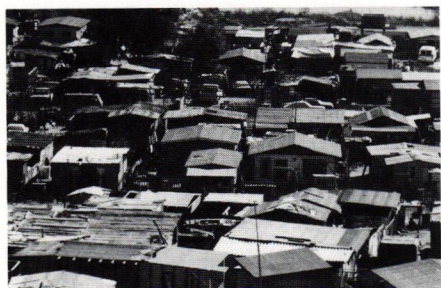
In the 1930s, “free trade zones” were officially established along the border region by the economically depressed Mexican government to promote foreign investment.<sup>7</sup> During World War II, Mexican workers were recruited as

<sup>3</sup> Gebhard, in *Architecture California* (1990). <sup>4</sup> Crawford (forthcoming). <sup>5</sup> Tigerman (1982).

<sup>6</sup> Acuña (1981). <sup>7</sup> Clement, et. al. (1989).



Kodak Corporation, Parque Internacional Tijuana, Tijuana.



Worker Housing, Carretera al Aeropuerto, Tijuana.

*braceros* ("helping arms") for the U.S. national economy.<sup>8</sup> Stranded at the border with the termination of the Bracero Program in 1964, this cheap labor force was used for the Border Industrialization Program according to which foreign investors were allowed to buy 30 year land trusts, own factories, and import duty-free: *maquiladoras*.<sup>9</sup> The United States would charge import duty only for the value added, or labor "borrowed," in Mexico when the goods re-entered the country.<sup>10</sup> The drastic devaluations of Mexico's currency in 1976 and 1982, the U.S. corporate search for cheap labor, and the increasing drive of southern California's toxin-producing industries to find less strictly regulated sites have spurred growth in the *maquiladora* zone.<sup>11</sup> In twenty-five years, hundreds of new production facilities have been built along the border, the population of

Tijuana has swollen to two million, and 430,000 – predominantly young and female – unorganized laborers (earning an average 80 cents per hour) have come with their families to work in the *maquiladoras*. They squat on land with no built housing or utility infrastructure where their children bathe in water contaminated by U.S. exported and illegally dumped toxic waste.<sup>12</sup>

While U.S. corporations have prospered, few of the hoped-for benefits to Mexico's economic development have materialized: underemployment persists, the less than 2% utilization of Mexican components has been insufficient to stimulate the Mexican economy, and no significant transfer of technology has occurred.<sup>13</sup> Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, leader of the political opposition in Mexico, has stated that "opening Mexico's economy to the forces of the international market under our present debt burden may be better for the interests of the present Mexican government, but it is worse for Mexicans."<sup>14</sup> The now taken-for-granted, cross-cultural bloodletting that has taken place over the years is brought to the attention of architectural circles by the growth of *maquiladora* facilities, now numbering 1500. The 1989 changes in Mexican foreign investment law now allow foreign ownership and development of tourist

<sup>8</sup> Chicano Communications Center (1976).

<sup>9</sup> The term *maquila* in colonial Mexico referred to the "processing charge" for grain milling. Today *maquila*, or *maquiladora*, is the term used for firms that process components imported into Mexico and then reexported. Clement, et. al. (1989). <sup>10</sup> Clement, et. al. (1989). <sup>11</sup> Sanchez (1990). <sup>12</sup> Bergman (1990).

<sup>13</sup> Clement, et. al. (1989). <sup>14</sup> Cárdenas (1990).



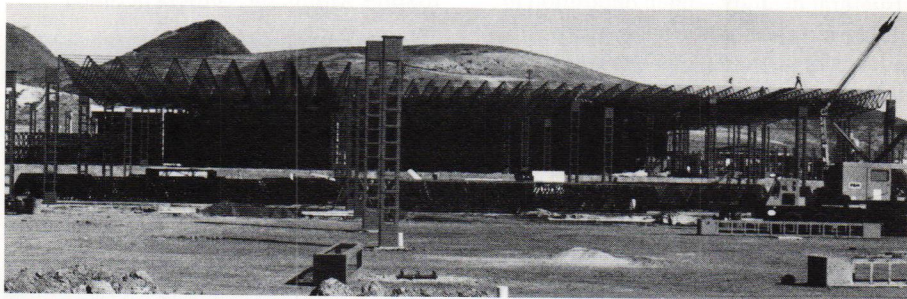
attractions with the same “export processing” privileges.<sup>15</sup> The “borrowing” is no longer restricted since the U.S.-Mexico balance of trade is so unequal that the Mexican government considers the exploitation of its work force by foreign capital a relative advance.

In this context, the American Institute of Architects has promoted the Maquiladora Program as “providing opportunities” for architects.<sup>16</sup> In a year when homelessness headed the AIA agenda in major cities across the country, when the national AIA advanced the affordable housing initiative, when the San Diego chapter became a national model for SRO development, and the Los Angeles Chapter welcomed contemporary Mexican architects, the seemingly contradictory promotion of the *maquiladora* program as a “regional” opportunity illustrates the slippage of political alignments within the project of regionalism.

Taken broadly, *maquila* – the small charge for borrowing – is a metaphor for the appropriation of regional difference for purposes of exploitation, repression, chauvinism, and gain. The condition of the Mexico-California border disturbs

any romantic notion of Spanish Colonial California style as the vernacular of co-existing cultures, or Santa Fe adobe style as rooted in light, materials, and Indian construction methods, or even a Tex Mex mix of deconstructivist Indian/Spanish/Anglo disarticulations as benign. Instead it epitomizes and boldly articulates the actual contradiction between reformism and repression, between liberation and chauvinism, inherent in the ambiguity of regionalism today. Attempts to cement the border “friendship” by architecturally healing the wound – streamlined factories, tourist shopping centers, the aura of cultural exchange – cannot erase the scars that after centuries of inequity are newly reinscribed each day. The *Miss Maquiladora* Beauty Pageant that makes up the face of consent<sup>17</sup> cannot cover over the organization and resistance taking place among the women of the maquila workforce.<sup>18</sup> Likewise, the wound apparently healed by architecture’s aesthetic investment erupts in *El Florido* with the rallying of squatters.<sup>19</sup>

Both aspects of this contradiction are inherent in the proposal of regionalism



**Parque Industrial, El Florido.**

<sup>15</sup> Clement, et. al. (1989).

<sup>16</sup> AIA Memorandum on 1989 Practice Committee Meeting, “Keys to Expanding Architectural Services.” September 1989. “Come to San Diego to learn from the architects and experts that are confronting the increasingly complex and competitive marketplace. You will learn about opportunities that you can present to help your clients save money – and put you in a position to provide the necessary services. Tour into Mexico to see first-hand how new industrial developments are providing opportunities for your firm.”

<sup>17</sup> Espinosa (1990). <sup>18</sup> Peña (1986).

<sup>19</sup> Espinosa (1990). *El Florido* (“the flowering place”) is one of the squatter housing developments where the *maquiladora* workers live that has been a center of political demonstrations protesting the poor housing conditions.



itself, and they cannot escape one another. Just as sameness is defined by difference deferred, colonial appropriation is defined by its suppression of an inevitable resistance – the hemorrhaging of an irreparable wound. As Kenneth Frampton argued in his noted essay on critical regionalism, liberation by means of aesthetic differentiation is now largely an illusory strategy, and pluralism (given inequality) is only the appearance of reform.<sup>20</sup> However, the wrenching experience of disparate peoples increasingly portends a new kind of regional resistance.

California is often viewed as a region in itself – defined by its position at the edge of the European world and on the Pacific Rim, removed from the centers of discourse, accepting of deviance, threatening to a national homogeneity, but also, a fertile ground for cultural innovation. This region that faces and engages the Third World embodies within its mass not only many distinct geographic identities but also a new regional condition. The signal characteristic of this condition is not ethnic or environmental expression of stylistic unity, but rather structural disunity – open opposition to universal values and homogeneous culture. Stylistic regionalism based on light quality, local materials, vernacular expressions, or avant-garde subversions has failed to resist corporate transna-

tional universalization, but the immense immigration of Asian and Latin American peoples<sup>21</sup> ensures that social, economic, and cultural difference overpowers even the underlying unity of capital.

Increasingly, the character of California's regions is determined not by climate or the re-presentation of imagined historical traditions, but by processes of differentiation and struggle behind which the major forces are capital development, mass migration, and inequality based on difference. In this context, the inversion of appropriated cultural signifiers as aesthetic signposts for commercial venture displaces and thereby erases from the urban townscape the actual richness of difference among sovereign cultures. Disparate, displaced, and disenfranchised peoples, confronted with these inverted signposts, recognize them as *signs of appropriation* and resist. Long-established patterns of urban development are shifting as foreign investors, immigrant entrepreneurs, and both black market and squatter housing alternatives redesign California cities. These "regions" are increasingly defined by the fissures within, the borders between



**Korean Golden Shopping Center, Shogun Japanese Restaurant, El Pollo Loco, Olympic Boulevard, Los Angeles**



**Clinica Popular, Mercado de Descuento, Parkview Street, Los Angeles.**

<sup>20</sup> Frampton (1983).

<sup>21</sup> In 1990 40% of Southern California's population is either Latino or Asian. Kotkin, (1989).

<sup>22</sup> For a more elaborated discussion of the politics of differentiation in architecture, see Mann (forthcoming).



cultures that will not soon melt into the American pot.

For architects, a liberating differentiation need not be a continuation of the Modern dream of a homogenizing utopia under the pluralist guise of "variety" or an all-but-exhausted avant-garde aesthetic resistance. As California embraces the twenty-first century, let us seek a differentiation based on equality and cultural integrity rather than exploitation and chauvinism.<sup>22</sup> This shifting of the terms of border relationships – the unleashing of the creative forces of social heterogeneity – will require a radical redirection of land use and economic development patterns rather than the mere aesthetic expression of cultural influences in regional styles.

What I want is an accounting with all three cultures – white, Mexican, Indian. I want the freedom to carve and chisel my own face, to staunch the bleeding with ashes, to fashion my own gods out of my entrails. And if going home is denied me then I will have to stand and claim my space, making a new culture – una cultura mestiza – with my own lumber, my own bricks and mortar and my own feminist architecture.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Anzaldúa (1987).

# An Architecture of Six Contradictions

Rob Wellington Quigley, AIA

So she sat with closed eyes, and half believed herself in Wonderland, though she knew she had but to open them again, and all would change to dull reality . . .<sup>1</sup>

Southern California is an invention.

Like some vast real estate development, turn-of-the-century promoters and civic boosters packaged, scripted, and sold this arid, impoverished landscape as the manifestation of the "Arcadian Dream."

As Kevin Starr<sup>2</sup> detailed in his colorful social history of southern California, the Arcadian Dream promised a better life by combining the best of Anglo and Hispanic cultures. Yankee ingenuity and capitalistic skills, complemented by Latin graciousness and love of life, would create a sun-drenched super society. Hand-colored Chamber of Commerce brochures depicted odd juxtapositions of

thriving industrial cities in the midst of bucolic orange groves. Distant, snow-capped mountains framed the scene, as a contented padre surveyed the prosperity from the ruins of his mission arcades.

From the reality of a few crumbling outpost missions and several struggling ranchos, civic boosters concocted a rich, romantic history for *Alta California*.

I do wonder what can have happened to me! When I used to read fairy tales, I fancied that kind of thing never happened, and now here I am in the middle of one!

In many post-industrial incarnations, this myth of a new regional society is still with us today. The spectacle of an ambitious society filling a cultural and historic void with invention, instead of patient tradition, may be unprecedented. Developers and civic groups ask for "Spanish style." More sophisticated clients ask for less clichéd, more contemporary versions of the same.

In more established cultures, local traditions, the climate, and a clear sense of history can combine to create a distinct regional vernacular. Short on both tradition and history, our mongrel society was left to invent "The Dream" and abandon itself to the short-sighted expedience of 20th century capitalism. The resulting populist vernacular, with its graceful



<sup>1</sup> Carroll, Lewis (1982) *Alice in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass*, New York, Simon and Schuster. This note applies to all text quoted.

<sup>2</sup> Starr, Kevin (1985) *Inventing the Dream*, New York, Oxford Press.



freeways, isolated convenience centers, and lack of public "place," is largely a response to the advantages and limitations of the automobile.

Our populist vernacular has a life of its own. In its rare pure state, untouched by architects trained in the art of "good taste" and shaped wholly by market forces, it has a certain perverse charm. The sculptural qualities of our better interchanges are well documented. Certain new low-end tile-slab warehouse districts seduce with a refreshing lack of pretense. The "charm" however, usually remains unappreciated until plenty of time has passed. Imagine your grandchildren joining preservationist groups to save today's corner "L" centers from the bulldozers of the 21st century!

Beyond this popular vernacular and the thinly picturesque imagery of the Arcadian Dream lie the issues that might define a more meaningful regionalism today. These issues remain largely neglected by the profession.

In a country that is fast minimizing the differences between cultures and regions, the search for a locally meaningful architecture is more and more relevant. Communication is becoming instantaneous, information universally available. Even regional speech patterns are coalescing into a monotone. Standardized graphics, franchised retail chains and widely circulated architectural magazines further dissipate local identities. As the larger built environment shrinks and becomes homogenized, the need for architects to define the particular and to capture the "spirit of the place" becomes critical.

In southern California, the keys to this spirit are contained in a series of colorful contradictions.

## One

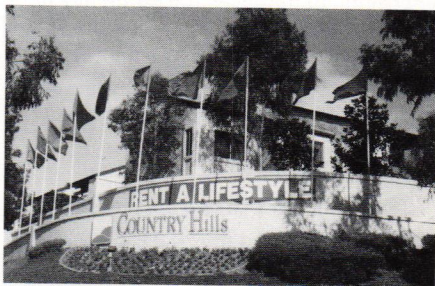
"I can't help it," said Alice very meekly; "I'm growing."

"You've no right to grow *here*," said the Dormouse.

"Don't talk nonsense," said Alice more boldly. "You know you're growing too."

"Yes, but I grow at a reasonable pace," said the Dormouse, "not in that ridiculous fashion."

With southern California growth rates increasing exponentially, built environments are created almost instantly. The average southern Californian moves every two years – a nomadic existence that adds to the flux. Faced with this accelerating growth, people grasp for some notion of permanence, of stability.



Under these conditions, the quick rise of nostalgic post-modernism and the longing for the symbols of a simpler time are understandable. And while it may be easier, and currently more fashionable, to architecturally celebrate transition and instability, the paradox and the challenge is to create a contemporary architecture that reconciles the psychological need for permanence with the realities of a flexible, transient lifestyle.

## Two

"If everyone minded their own business," said the Duchess in a hoarse growl, "the world would go round a deal faster than it does."

We are transforming from a public to a private society. Ironically, new electronic techniques of communication and information leave us isolated. The rich subtleties of face-to-face interaction have been replaced by the impersonal privacy

of a modem and computer screen. Architects silently fax their dreams of active urban spaces and teeming sidewalk cafes to consultants just blocks away. City Council meetings are televised, and constituents vote by phone.

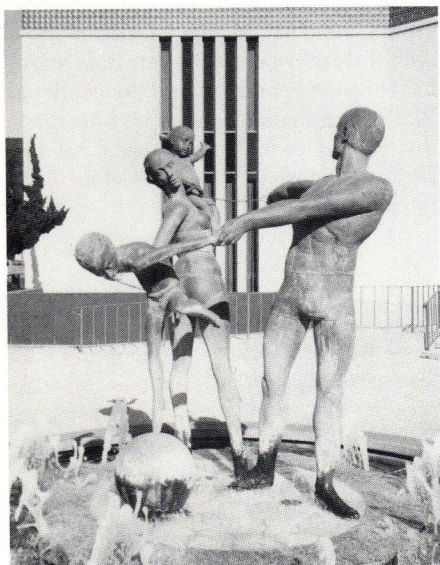
In a regional society where we spend much of our time alone in automobiles with car phones, and the rest sequestered in detached, single-family suburban houses huddled around the TV set, what can the role of public urban space be? How should architecture influence this contradiction of interactive isolation?

The solutions must create a built environment that uses the efficiency of the new communication devices and the luxury of instant information to enhance and promote real interaction. A new kind of intimacy may be possible.

### Three

"You couldn't have it if you did want it," the Queen said. "The rule is, jam tomorrow and jam yesterday – but never jam today."

Southern California abounds in political paradoxes. One of the most permissive



Free, playful, but never nude.

and experimental regions of the United States is dominated by a morbid political conservatism. Orange County and most of San Diego County make small midwestern towns seem liberal. In the midst of the information revolution and new technologies to provide low-cost publications, the massive populations of Los Angeles and San Diego are controlled by monopoly newspapers whose unchallenged views become truth. In a society that prides itself on free speech, we are, in fact, carefully managed by the media.

Architects deal with this dichotomy daily. Clients see nothing unusual about urging the designer to do something new, original and untried – as long as the unknown is avoided and it looks like what was built last time. Marketing consultants carefully tabulate what has been done in the past. They take an average of this mediocrity and, in a astounding leap of logic, present it "scientifically" as the desire of the public. Developers are mesmerized by the implied safety of this formalized incest, even as their capitalist instincts argue for the new and innovative. Architect selection boards, often consisting of very sophisticated people, avoid intelligent risks that they might take as individuals in an effort to be "responsible."

The challenge is to clarify and distill these requests into a more honest and vibrant architecture. The danger is in fearing the naked contradictions and trying to "resolve" them.

### Four

"But I don't want to go among mad people," Alice remarked.

"Oh, you can't help that," said the Cat. "We're all mad here. I'm mad. You're mad."

"How do you know I'm mad?" said Alice.

"You must be," said the Cat, "or you wouldn't have come here."



Coupled with this political paradox is a bizarre social paradox: a region of laid-back high achievers. Suntanned stockbrokers head for the office in their convertibles at 3:30 in the morning. High-stress meetings take place around the pool. One can imagine fax machines on executive skateboards. Casual and Formal, Driven and Devil-May-Care meet every day.

So what kind of built environment does such a schizophrenic society deserve? Would a society where Ronald Reagan and Mickey Mouse could smoke dope and watch X-rated movies, while surfers break for power lunches, be so far from that Arcadian dream?

The architect's challenge is to cling to the freedom and spontaneity possible in such a society. The danger is to be swept up in the hedonism of instant gratification and momentary trends.

#### Five

"Let the Looking-glass creatures, whatever they be, Come and dine with the Red Queen, the White Queen, and me!"

Historically bi-cultural, and now truly multi-cultural, southern California archi-



Acupuntura in Koreatown – relieve pain as the Chinese do.

tecture has, in the past, acknowledged its Pacific Rim connection. Japanese design had a profound impact on the region, as the evocative work of the Greene brothers filtered down to the bungalow court. Two generations of early southern California modernists were also influenced by the calm clarity of traditional Japanese architecture. Mexican architecture and culture, of course, is central to the very concept of the "Dream."

These influences, however, have taken place in a sanitized way among segregated cultures: southern California architects were largely concerned with only the formal issues of space and aesthetics.

As we merge into a less tidy, more diverse society, the challenge is not just to create an architecture sensitive to the most subtle contributions available from these cultures. The relationship between the Hispanic and the dominant Anglo culture is especially complex and rich with possibilities. Traditional "melting pot" notions are both limiting and inappropriate when, in the case of some, the mother country is only miles away.

Like the despised Iraqis today, we "annexed" this land and its people in the name of manifest destiny. Over 150 years have passed and the tensions still exist. Architecture must get beyond the romantic scenography of the Arcadian Dream and deal with a real cultural relationship.

The opportunity for a more meaningful built environment lies in the ability to promote understanding and interaction while preserving and celebrating the distinct differences between cultures.

#### Six

Tweedledum looked round him with a satisfied smile. "I don't suppose," he said, "there'll be a tree left standing, for ever so far round, by the time we've finished!"

Physical forces give this region a special character. But even an aspect as obvious

as our benign climate seems more bumbled than manipulated by local architects. We think of ecological awareness as a popular artifact of the 60s. Despite the recurring crises of energy and resources, north arrows are nothing more than a graphic symbol to most architects. Buildings are routinely uninhabitable without mechanical conditioning and artificial light.

Honest concerns for the lifestyle possibilities of our climate should lay the foundation for a diverse, but distinct regional aesthetic. Perhaps dazzled by the Dream's promise of "easy" outdoor living, few designers ever craft outdoor spaces that are convenient and usable extensions of architectural space. Modification of sky glare, passive control of the diurnal temperature swings, and manipulation of breezes seem virgin territory.

Our climate encourages experimentation with materials. Here southern California designers have risen to the challenge. Over the last few decades, snickers from cold climate contemporaries have turned to respect and ironic emulation, as local architects raised raw framing, cheap stucco and asphalt shingles to an appropriately fragile art. At last high art and a budget-driven, vernacular reality meet with inspired enthusiasm.

It sounded an excellent plan, no doubt, and very neatly and simply arranged; the only difficulty was, that she had not the smallest idea how to set about it . . .

"Would you tell me please how to get from here?"

"That depends a good deal on where you want to go to."

In the face of these paradoxes, how are today's southern California architects to respond? We've been architectural pharmacists, mindlessly filling mission tile prescriptions by the thousands.

At the other extreme, we simply negate the elusive issues at the roots of the regional dilemma altogether. Idiosyncratic personal concerns or the search for the universal or international offer convenient sanctuaries. Modernist, Post-Modernist or Deconstructivist, the more global the solution, the less locally meaningful the result. Only an authentically local architecture can aspire to transcend the provincial.

The best work of southern California architects has been tempered with concern for the more difficult aspects of regionalism. From the seminal work of Gill and Schindler, through a calculated Neutra and an intuitive Frank Gehry, their best work speaks to a spirit and identity that makes it uniquely southern Californian.

It is the spirit rather than the visual identity that is the ultimate yardstick of regionalism. An experience rather than an object, an event rather than an artifact, the new regionalism I'm concerned with will respond to the elusive contradictions outlined above. The new regionalism will be simple, yet painfully complex, knowingly unpretentious and casually sophisticated. At one with its brief history, it will evoke permanence through spirit and intellect rather than detail and nostalgia. It will redirect the efficiency of new communication devices and the luxury of instant information to enhance and promote human interaction. Privacy must be given the opportunity to confront spontaneity and social accident. The Pacific Rim and Hispanic cultures must be allowed the contributions of their identities and local histories, even as we work to merge into an "integrated" society.

In southern California the opportunity for a more authentic built environment may lie in the struggle to weave an architecture of cultural diversity and contradiction. Comfortable only in its reaction to the climate, the real Arcadian Dream will not be a blending, but a colorful, distinct collage of dislocation. □



## Contributors to this Issue

L. COLEMAN COKER, AIA

Mockbee/Coker Architects  
Memphis, Tennessee; Canton, Missouri

BETSEY OLENICK DOUGHERTY, FAIA

AIA Regional Director  
Partner  
Dougherty + Dougherty, Newport Beach

GARRETT ECKBO, FASLA

Landscape Architect, Professor Emeritus  
Department of Landscape Architecture  
University of California, Berkeley

DIANE FAVRO

Assistant Professor  
Graduate School of Architecture  
University of California, Los Angeles

DANIEL P. GREGORY

Associate Editor  
*Sunset* Magazine, Menlo Park

RAY KAPPE, FAIA

Professor and Founding Director, SCI-ARC  
Kappe Architects Planners, Los Angeles

LIAN HURST MANN, AIA

Architect, Postdoctoral Scholar  
Department of Education  
University of California, Los Angeles

CLARENCE MONDALE

Professor of American Civilization  
Program in American Studies  
George Washington University,  
Washington D.C.

DONALD E. OLSEN, FAIA

Architect, Professor Emeritus  
Department of Architecture  
University of California, Berkeley

ROB WELLINGTON QUIGLEY, AIA

Principal  
Rob Wellington Quigley, AIA,  
San Diego

BARRY WASSERMAN, FAIA

Chair, Department of Architecture  
California Polytechnic State University,  
Pomona

LISA WIGHTMAN, AIA

Principal  
Lisa Wightman, AIA, Architect,  
Los Angeles

CHRISTOPHER L. YIP

Associate Professor  
Architecture Department  
California Polytechnic State University,  
San Luis Obispo